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EZZELIN:  
A DRAMATIC POEM.





# EZZELIN:

A DRAMATIC POEM.

BY

TWO BROTHERS.



LONDON:

GEORGE BELL AND SONS, YORK STREET,  
COVENT GARDEN.

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TO THE MEMORY OF MY BROTHER,  
EDWARD KAYE JUPP,

I DEDICATE THIS

PLAY

OF

“EZZELIN.”

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## PREFACE.

BY THE SURVIVING AUTHOR.



GOOD play needs no preface, a bad play is not improved by one. Whether the play of Ezzelin be good or bad my readers must decide; but I think a short preface is necessary to prevent the whole aim of the drama being misunderstood. It (the drama) may very possibly appear at first sight to have been written as a vindication of the persecuting spirit and policy of the mediæval Church of Rome, but I must distinctly state that it was not so intended. "Ezzelin" is merely intended to represent a phase of the struggle between the decaying despotism of the Church of Rome and the votaries of the new learning. This latter party, not unnaturally, enlisted on its side all the more ardent and cultured of the youth of Europe, and, inasmuch as no move-

ment—whether religious, political, or purely intellectual, can be said to work unmixed good,—admirers of the Renaissance and subsequent Reformation must forgive me if I have dwelt in this play rather on the darker than the brighter side of the great movement of the sixteenth century against the ancient creed of Christendom. In the ranks of those who hailed the downfall of scholastic theology and clerical tyranny were to be found many who aimed at annihilation and destruction rather than reform, and had no wish to see the powers formerly exercised by the Roman hierarchy transferred to the ministers of separate Christian bodies. They hailed the Reformation more as the inauguration of a reign of unbridled license, than as the beginning of a new and purer system of religion; and Ezzelin, the hero of this drama, must be considered merely as a type of this class of destructives—a class which, it is useless to deny, did exist, much to the regret of the chiefs of the reforming party.

One word, before I close this tediously apologetic preface, as to the character of the Inquisitor Dante. Englishmen have never had much admiration for the dark and bloody designs and machinations of the Inquisition (indeed the very Church which first instituted that baneful tribunal, has of

late seemed somewhat ashamed of its own progeny); but it may well be believed that among the Inquisitors many conscientious and even noble-hearted men were to be found; fanatics, perhaps, but men who were bitterly needed to check and restrain the paganism of the Renaissance and the lawlessness of the Reformation. Dante, I think my readers will admit, is no vulgar butcher, but a true follower of his great master S. Dominic, or, to use the mediæval expression current of the fierce followers of that saint, a true hound of the Lord (*Domini canis*), eager in the pursuit of heresy and crime.

My brother's early death prevented his doing more than composing a small portion of "Ezzelin." Any faults of style or language, and above all, any anachronisms must be charged on me—not against his memory.





## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ALONZO, *an Italian Duke, father of Ezzelin.*

ARNOLD, *a Count, father of Annette.*

DANTE, *an Inquisitor, friend of Arnold and Alonzo.*

EZZELIN, *son of Alonzo.*

SEBASTIAN, *a Captain of Mercenaries in the service of the  
Inquisition.*

UBERTO, *Chaplain to Arnold.*

LORENZO DA FIORI, *a relation of Arnold.*

TONIO, *Arnold's servant.*

GONZALO, ANTONIO, *Alonzo's servants.*

ANDREAS, *Dante's servant.*

*Warder, Soldiers, Messengers, &c.*

ANNETTE, *daughter of Arnold.*

LUCIA, *a Nun, daughter of Alonzo.*

JULIA, *a Nun.*

*Women, &c. &c.*

The scene lies in the north of Italy, not far from Venice,  
but changes in two scenes to a Castle in the Tyrol.





## EZZELIN.

### ACT I.

SCENE I. *Arnold's Castle (a room).*

*Enter* ARNOLD, DANTE, and ANNETTE.

*Dante.* \*

**H**OW sweetly shines the moonbeam through  
yon window ;  
I ever did prefer the ancient quaintness  
Of these old, pillar'd, fretwork-roofèd halls,  
To that fine gilded glare, that men delight in.  
I could have wish'd to pass the hour ere supper  
Unlighted, save by moonbeams, and to let  
'This holiness of scene pervade our talk ;  
But this I tell you, that your entertainment  
Will always come thrice welcome to my soul,  
In this old knightly-memory haunted castle.

*Arnold.* Nay, then, I deem my castle is thrice  
honour'd,

In winning praise from one so highly gifted  
As thou art.

*Dante.* Such I ever yet have held it.  
But, how now, Annette, have you any news  
Of Ezzelin? Nay. Had I thought the question  
Would make you weep, I ne'er had ask'd it you.

*Arnold.* Darling, I will explain the matter for you.  
Alas ! we've had but bitter news of late  
(Such as may well excuse my poor child's tears).  
Ezzelin, we greatly fear, on his way home  
Is ta'en by pirates.

*Dante.* How long back was this?

*Arnold.* Two months we heard no *news* ; last  
week a rumour,  
Too true, I fear. Just now the castle galley  
Is injured, and I cannot send to seek him.

*Dante.* Thank Heaven ! a friend of mine,  
A privateer, has just put in this morning.  
I'll bid him follow on the track, and soon  
You'll hear good news, I trust.

*Arnold.* Was ever priest  
Beloved with so good cause? Could but I thank you



As you deserve !—Annette, my child, for shame !  
Can you not dry your tears, and find some words  
To thank this holy man ?

*Annette.* I wish I could

Say what I feel. I cannot.

*Dante.* Nay, then go,

And pour your thanks to Heaven, the true preserver  
Of him and all.

*Annette.* I was going to the chapel  
To pray for Ezzelin, and I came to you  
To ask your blessing, father.

*Dante.* And I grant it.

[*Exit* ANNETTE.]

She pleases me more than I dared expect.  
Your chaplain gave me no good words of her ;  
He said that she was taken with wild fancies,  
And yesterday she said (for so he told me),  
She thought she ne'er could love the joys of heaven,  
For thinking of poor souls that were in hell.

*Arnold.* Alas ! 'tis part of this calamity :  
She is my only child, and I, perhaps,  
Rate her too highly, but she seems to me  
A ray, a lovely flower, almost an angel,  
But for a kind of self-will, and devotion

To these wild fancies ; this makes me more regret  
The loss of Ezzelin ; he was her star, her anchor.  
She clung to him, as cling the creeping ivies  
To some strong church tower, when fiends walk the  
                  night,

Rustling their leaves for fear ; he had a mind  
For strength, and sweetness, far beyond his age,  
And that she knew. O they were lovers indeed !  
What joy I took in them, how I remember  
Seeing them often in our garden glades,  
Walking or sitting, with their arms fast twined  
Around each other, and her eyes of blue  
Meeting his dark eyes, with sweet earnestness,  
Unconsciously a picture. Then it seem'd  
That Ezzelin had no thought, save how to render  
His Annette happy, and him worthy of her,  
And Annette's soul was day by day more rapt,  
To love, to trust, to cling to Ezzelin.  
And yet I wrong them, none were more beloved  
By all, and none did strive more earnestly  
To school themselves, that others might be happy.  
Well were they known by all around these walls ;  
In all their sorrows did my vassals come  
To them for sympathy and kindly aid.

The little children in the villages  
Would run to meet them as they came along,  
With flowers and humble greetings, nor were  
spurned

By either, these poor offerings of affection.  
But when young Ezzelin's father, Lord Alonzo,  
Anxiously watching his son's youth, and eager,  
(For ever did ambition rule his mind,  
And though already duke, and sovereign ruler  
Of more than half a province, where by thousands  
Obedient vassals own his iron sway,  
He aims at higher state by Ezzelin's marriage,  
Alliance with some mighty family  
High in the service of the emperor,)  
Saw where his son's affections bent their way,  
He sent him from this place, and bade him travel  
To see fresh countries, trusting that the sight  
And pleasures of the world would soon uproot  
The old affection, for he vainly deem'd  
That Ezzelin's love was but a boyish passion,  
Fleeting and transient, but that love was fix'd ;  
And since he knew that it was vain to strive  
Against Alonzo's will, and having not  
As yet the wherewithal to keep his Annette

In such estate as did become his rank,  
He told his tyrant father manfully  
That other love than Annette he would not,  
And though he bent his inclination then,  
That nothing in the world, save grisly death,  
Should tear their love apart—Yet say in truth,  
Desire you to hear more, or does my tale  
Seem wearisome?

*Dante.*                      Nay, my much honour'd friend,  
I love to hear of such a gallant youth.  
Deem not that priests (although they may not  
wed)

Must shrink from tales like these ; nay, rather, when  
I hear of love like this, it makes me think  
Of that far higher love of One above.  
Think not that earthly love displeases God,  
Nay, rather, holy is it in His sight ;  
He placed it in man's heart, and He will bless  
Those who do rightly use the precious gift.  
In love of youth and maid to one another,  
Which prompts them to give up all joys or riches  
If call'd to do it, we may faintly see  
The shadowing of that ever perfect love  
Of Him who died to save His own elect,

And calls the Church His bride. But tell me more.  
What said Alonzo to his son?

*Arnold.*

At first

He raved and threaten'd, and declared the grave  
Should cover Ezzelin, ere he gave consent  
To such a union ; but his son, undaunted,  
Still firmly said that he would never yield,  
And then Alonzo changed his threatening tone,  
And told his son to say no more, and smiled  
In crafty guile, and laughingly replied  
To Ezzelin's proud glance with soothing words,  
And told him that he soon would cease to think  
Of such a simple girl, when he should see  
A little of the world, and know that wealth  
Unbounded was his own, and he could choose  
The proudest maiden of bright Italy,  
Or some fair lady of the empire,  
For bride ; then bade him seek his couch at once,  
And sleep such love-sick fancies off. A youth  
Like him knew not what love was ; he was caught  
By a fair face, 'twas always thus with boys.  
They knew not their own minds : but Ezzelin said,  
“ Father, no more of this ; my vows are seal'd,  
And I will see her ere I go,” then turn'd

And sought his room—more of the scene I know  
not.

*Dante.* Then Ezzelin did not come to see your  
child?

*Arnold.* Oh yes, he did. In the bright early morn  
While rosily the east gleam'd, and the clouds  
In long white fleecy banners stretch'd across  
The pale blue summer sky, and on each bush  
And tree within the dewy castle chase  
The birds were warbling, came young Ezzelin.  
And she, my Annette, at her window stood,  
Looking across the dewy lawns, to watch  
The rising mists that floated o'er the sward  
Of the green chase, (that as you know extends  
With woods on either hand for many a mile,)  
When her brave lover's form appear'd in sight.  
Then down the winding castle stair she ran,  
And o'er the drawbridge, o'er the verdant lawn,  
Leaving a smooth wet track upon the grass,  
And met her Ezzelin. I myself had waked  
Early that morning, and with heated brow  
Stood at the casement pane, and saw them meet.  
Ah! can that scene fade from my memory's eye?  
E'en now as I relate, I seem to see

My lovely daughter throw herself again  
Upon her Ezzelin's faithful breast, while he  
Clasp'd her with his strong arms, and thus they  
stood.

At such a moment words refuse to come :  
The only thought that fills the lovers' breasts  
Is that they hold their dearest thing on earth  
Within their arms,—the glances of their eyes  
Speak more than words of fondest eloquence.  
And thus it was with them : my Annette's eyes,  
Glistening with tears, were fix'd on Ezzelin ;  
While he, with such a yearning glance of anguish,  
Bent his fond look on her. Ah me ! I doubt not  
That they had fain waited in that embrace  
For ever ! Calmly play'd the morning breeze  
Around them, and the sparkling dews still lay  
Upon the grass in clusters thick as beads ;  
The birds' sweet songs grew louder, clear the thrush  
Rang his shrill notes, and from the flaming sky  
Faintly the mounting lark's sweet song was heard.  
Unheeding all, lock'd in that tight embrace  
They stood. At last poor Ezzelin softly loosed  
His loved one's clinging arms, and bent his head  
To her's, as if to whisper words of hope

And comfort for the future ; then my daughter  
Bade him farewell, and Ezzelin slowly turn'd ;  
But when he lost the sight of her he loved,  
He quickly strode along the level sward,  
As fearful that his shaking resolution  
Might fail ; so up the forest chase he went,  
And soon his form was swallow'd up in mists.  
But Annette stood, still gazing after him,  
Rigid like some fair statue, while the breeze  
Play'd with her golden tresses, till the mists  
Hid Ezzelin from her view, and then she turn'd  
Towards her home, but blindly reeling, fell  
Swooning upon the grass. I saw her fall,  
And, issuing from the castle, with the help  
Of her attendants, bore her to her room.  
But for some time she lay in burning fever,  
And, Father, sometimes I have fear'd her brain  
Received a shock that morning, and has not  
Recover'd altogether, but I know not.  
She seems so wise and good, that I could think  
My fears were groundless, save for these wild fancies  
Of which my chaplain told you.

*Dante.*

Do not fear ;

I do not think because a maiden dreams



That you need think her life is sadden'd. Nay,  
The young who think at all have ever fancies,  
Strange and unnatural ; a lonely life  
With little occupation, and much time  
For musing,—separated too from one  
She loves, accounts for all such thoughts as these.  
I own that I was shock'd at first, but now,  
Knowing her troubles, do not wonder ; but  
'Tis long ere she and Ezzelin saw each other,—  
Is't not ?

*Arnold.* Full six long years at least.

Annette had reach'd her eighteenth year that morn  
When Ezzelin went, and now is twenty-four.

*Dante.* And have you heard much news of  
Ezzelin ?

*Arnold.* But seldom since he went ; but for this  
capture

He had been with us now. Men say, indeed,  
'That he is strangely alter'd ; yet I doubt not  
His heart still beats as warmly now for Annette  
As on that summer morn.

*Dante.* But do you know,  
Has Ezzelin ever sent you any message ?  
Men sometimes have forgotten in the whirl

Of war or pleasure, their first love. Perchance,  
Although I would not grieve you, it is thus  
With your fair daughter's lover.

*Arnold (aside).* 'Tis ever thus with these cold-  
hearted priests;  
Forced as they are to crush all thoughts of love,  
They never can believe that other men  
Can really love : as well to talk of battle  
To some young convent girl, as talk of love  
To him. (*Aloud.*) Nay, father, this light conver-  
sation  
Must weary you ; and, hark ! the bell for supper  
Calls us away.

*Dante.* My son, I soon will join you :  
I pray you bid my servant come to me  
As soon as possible. [*Exit ARNOLD.*]

*Dante (alone).* Poor Arnold ! he is wrapt in  
Ezzelin ;  
And though I see he sometimes doubts his love,  
Will not allow his inmost heart's suspicion  
To gather strength by hearing me confirm  
His doubts, yet none the less they haunt his soul.  
'Tis true, I know not much of Ezzelin,—  
But well I know his father and his kinsfolk.

(Ah ! one of them too well ; cease pining, heart !)  
This Ezzelin comes not of a constant race,  
But <sup>one</sup> inconstant as the tossing sea.

[ *Walks to the window.*

How clear the bay lies now before my eyes,  
Like a cold plain of azure 'neath the moon,  
Which seems to spread a holy influence,  
Calming the heaving deep. May Annette's love  
Shine like yon moon on Ezzelin, and bind  
His heart if prone to changing. Ah ! fair maiden,  
Thou hast known many cares already : hard  
It is to lose one's dearest friend on earth  
When death removes him from us ; harder yet  
Perchance to wait as thou hast done, enduring  
The anguish of suspense, to see thy lover  
Embark upon the world's wide, tossing billows,  
And know not where he is, or if his love  
Burn constant or be quench'd. I hardly dare  
To think upon thy future. Can they wed ?  
Nay, rather, shall they ? may not God require  
The separation of their hearts ? She doubts,  
So I have heard, and he—well, let it rest,  
“ Sufficient is the evil to the day,”  
And in the Eternal breast the issue lies.

*Enter ANDREAS.*

Andreas, despatch a trusty messenger  
 To seek Sebastian ; bid him come to me  
 To-morrow morning, without fail. [*Exit* ANDREAS.

Well, yes,

I must see more of Annette, but the bell  
 Calls me away. I must not linger here. [*Exit.*

SCENE 2. *The same room.*

*Enter* ARNOLD, ANNETTE, DANTE, *and* SEBASTIAN.*Dante.*

COUNT ARNOLD, this is my good friend  
 Sebastian,

The captain of the galley that you see  
 Lying at anchor yonder, like a speck  
 Upon the deep blue waters of the bay.

*Arnold.* Captain Sebastian, welcome to my castle.  
 You may perhaps have heard of Ezzelin,  
 Son of old Lord Alonzo, whose domains  
 Lie not far off from mine.

*Sebastian.* Count Arnold, I have heard of him,  
 I think ;

He was Alonzo's only son, a youth  
Well made and full of courage.

*Arnold.*

Yes, the same.

During his journey from Illyria  
His ship was taken by the Turkish foe,  
And all on board were captured, but they say  
The pirate ship was in the fray disabled,  
And forced to put in port not far from here,  
And so we heard the news of Ezzelin's capture.  
The holy father has assured us here  
That you will follow on the pirate's track  
If possible, and rescue our young hero.  
Oh, if you can but bring him back again  
We never shall forget your services,  
And anything that I can do for you  
In bettering your fortunes shall be done.  
Meanwhile accept my fervent gratitude  
And my young daughter's thanks, for Ezzelin  
Is her betroth'd. If you have ever known  
What 'tis to lose a loved one, you will feel  
For her. When you return I pray you honour  
My castle by remaining some few days  
Our welcome guest.

*Sebastian.*

I thank you greatly, Count ;

Methinks were I to slight an invitation  
To such a castle men could call me mad.  
And as for Ezzelin, I will do my best.  
Meanwhile, for your great courtesy, accept  
A rough old sailor's thanks ; in two short hours  
My galley will be ready. Now, farewell.

[*Exit, singing.*]

The briny deep is the sailor's home,  
The deck is the sailor's bed ;  
And he slumbers well, though the white waves swell,  
And the tempest roars o'erhead.

*Arnold.* A bluff old fellow.

*Dante.* Yes, but none the worse  
For that ;—and let me tell you, my good friend,  
A better man ne'er breathed. He saved my life  
Not long ago. (*Aside.*) How well the fellow plays  
The seaman's part.

*Annette.* And how was that, my father ?

*Dante.* Ah, Annette ! you, like other girls, know  
well

The way to reach an old man's heart,—to tempt  
His vanity, by making him repeat  
Stories of his adventures,—yet I'm glad

To tell you anything ; but, Arnold, stay :  
Would you not like to hear the tale ?

*Arnold.*

Good father,

Business about the castle calls for me ;  
But if you can amuse my daughter Annette,  
And keep her thoughts awhile fix'd on your stories,  
I shall be grateful. [*Exit* ARNOLD.]

*Annette.*

Oh, my father, say,

Do you indeed think Ezzelin will be saved ?  
I know I ought not thus to talk to you ;  
But O ! you know how one is comforted  
By hearing words of hope. I have imagined  
My Ezzelin dead perhaps, or, badly wounded,  
Lying in anguish on the blood-stain'd deck,  
With no one near to bathe his smarting wounds ;  
Or sold to be a slave. O father, father,  
Tell me you think he will be saved ! I know  
That God is watching o'er him, wheresoe'er  
He lies ; yet e'en religion's voice at times  
Falls cold and dull upon the bleeding heart.  
This keen suspense will kill me ; I am like  
One walking through a dark and dreary wood,  
Following a winding path that ever seems  
About to end in daylight, yet whenever

I think I see the sunlight not far off,  
And hurry forwards, darkness comes again  
With tenfold gloom and horror !

*Enter ARNOLD in armour.*

*Arnold.* Look not so frighten'd, Annette ; I've  
determined

To join Sebastian in the expedition ;  
For but this moment did a messenger  
Come with the tidings that the enemy  
Were seen not far from here in rapid flight,  
Speeding across the bay. So I have arm'd  
A band of stout retainers, and do purpose  
To aid in the pursuit ; the thought of battle  
Puts new life in me, and I feel no more  
The numbing chill of age. Farewell, good father ;  
I've given orders to my servants here  
To treat you in my absence as their lord,  
And bow to your commands. Farewell, my Annette,  
I trust to see you smile on my return ;  
A few short days, and you will see me back  
With Ezzelin safe and sound.

*Annette.* Oh, dearest father,  
Indeed you must not risk your life for him.



Shame on my woman's nature ! I could wish  
That I had been a man, to take your place  
And join in Ezzelin's rescue ! Well, 'tis vain  
To talk like this—but, father, do not go !

*Arnold.* Come, cheer up, Annette ! do not let me  
start

In such a tearful manner ; tush ! my child ;  
There will not be much danger—I have been  
In fifty fights at least without a scratch.  
A soldier's daughter should not fear like this ;  
Come, rouse yourself, and give me one fond kiss  
Before I go. [*Embraces her.*

*Annette.* May all good angels watch  
Over your head, my father ; now, farewell !

*Dante (to Arnold).* A word with you before you  
go, my son. [*Exeunt ARNOLD and DANTE.*

*Annette (alone).* They say that trials never come  
alone

In this sad world ; O, surely 'twas enough  
To grieve for Ezzelin's safety, knowing not  
If he were dead or living, forced to live  
In agonizing doubt, with nothing certain  
To satisfy the cravings of the heart,  
And ever forced to draw my only source

Of comfort from a few detach'd reports,  
Which, like the ghostly lights that dance and flicker  
At night in reedy swamps, but make believe  
To show the truth, and sometimes fill the mind  
With hope awhile, yet soon again Despair,  
Following upon the steps of Hope, as darkness  
Pursues the day, returns with double horror.  
And now not only Ezzelin, but my father  
Is girt by danger ! O ! my heart will break  
Beneath its anguish'd load ! What have I done,  
That I should suffer thus ? Can Heaven be just  
To send me so much sorrow ? Have I ever  
Neglected our religion's sacred rites ?  
But yesterday I spent long hours in prayer  
Before our chapel's altar, and to-day  
My heart is stabb'd afresh ! Where shall I turn  
For comfort ? I can strive no more with sorrow.  
Oh Ezzelin ! Ezzelin ! [*Flings herself on the ground.*]

*Enter* UBERTO.

*Uberto.* What, no one here ? I'm sure I heard  
a voice  
Of one in sorrow or in pain. What ! Annette  
Extended on the floor in this wild manner,

With all her hair dishevell'd, and her clothes  
Cover'd with dust ! Come, Annette, what's the  
" matter ?

*Annette (impatiently).* Leave me, I say.

*Uberto.* If you must throw yourself  
Upon the floor, you surely might have found  
A better place than this old dusty corner !  
You'll get yourself into a mess, I say.  
Get up ! don't lie there like a naughty child,  
But tell me what your sorrow is.

*Annette (rising).* This place  
Is not the confessional, so leave me ;  
Or you may stay, and I will go.  
[*Crosses the room, and exit.*]

*Uberto.* Good heavens !  
I'm sure that girl is mad ! how can she dare  
To speak in such a way ? I never yet  
Heard such impertinence from anybody,  
And I'll not stand it either. Would her father  
Were safe return'd from his mad expedition.  
Plague on these lovers ! men should live like me,  
And leave the race of women to decay ;  
And so it should, could I but have my way.

SCENE 3. *The same room.*

*Enter DANTE and UBERTO.*

*Uberto.*



ES, my good brother, that young girl is mad ;  
I do believe that love has turn'd her brain.  
But now I found her stretch'd upon the  
floor,

And when I gently bade her rise, and tell  
Her griefs to me, she told me to my face  
That I was not in the confessional,  
And that she would not tell me, and then ran  
Out of the room.

*Dante (smiling).* Good brother—pardon me—  
I do not think you understand the girl.

*Uberto.* Not understand her ! why, I've lived as  
chaplain  
In this old castle nigh on thirty years,  
And heard her tell her sins a thousand times.  
Not understand her ! that's a fine idea !

*Dante.* That girl needs careful management, my  
brother,  
Or she will fall away from truth, I fear ;

Already she has got some strange ideas,  
And does not fear to question what one tells her ;  
But if you rule her well, with such a nature  
As her's, she'll prove a pure and holy lamb  
For the Good Shepherd's pasture. With permission  
From you, I'll hear her at her next confession.

*Uberto.* O certainly, I shall be very glad ;  
She only wearies me with her strange notions  
About religious mysteries. I hope  
That you will scold her well for disrespect,  
And make her do a sharp and heavy penance.

*Dante.* Do you know much of Ezzelin, her  
lover?

*Uberto.* O, he's a fine young man, beloved by all,  
And pays me great respect.

*Dante.* I mean, my brother,  
Is he a faithful son of Rome—one fit  
To be this maiden's husband?

*Uberto.* I believe  
He's orthodox enough, at least I hope so ;  
I know his sister is.

*Dante.* Well, if he's rescued,  
I'll see to it ; for look you, my dear brother,  
Heresy is about us ; 'tis in vain

We wage against it wars of fierce oppression,  
And drag its votaries to the burning pile ;  
This will not stamp it out—we must be wary ;  
Priests must bestir themselves if they would check  
The doctrines of the dog apostate Luther.  
I tell you, Fra Uberto, when I look  
Around, and see the shepherds of the flock  
Idle and bent on luxury, and the Church  
Diseased and rotten, that the thought comes o'er  
me—

What if this heresy be God's awful judgment  
Upon us for our sins ! O, may His Passion,  
Who on the tree endured the assault of hell,  
And led the tyrant captive, shield us now  
From the approaching plague ! To all that's evil  
The Lutheran doctrine shows a tempting bait.  
We must watch well our charges, lest the tares  
Of heresy be sown ; therefore I ask'd you  
So earnestly about young Ezzelin's faith.

*Uberto.* Good brother, you are eloquent indeed ;  
Your warnings make me shiver ; do you really  
Believe the Church to be in danger now ?  
Have you forgotten that the infernal gates  
Are powerless against her ?

*Dante.* True, while she keeps her first and chosen  
love,

And leans on her true Spouse ; but now, alas !  
The world, the flesh, the devil hem her round,  
And she is weak and wavering ; sin's bright glare  
Dazzles and fascinates her failing eyes.

*Uberto (aside).* 'Tis very hot, listening to this  
fierce priest,  
And yet I like him for his earnestness.  
I wish I had some wine. (*Aloud.*) Well, my dear  
brother,

What is the remedy for such a state ?

*Dante.* Brother, the remedy lies in ourselves :  
We must not weary, but be ever working,  
Bearing the harvest day's fierce heat and burden ;  
Rest comes at eve ; still 'mid the tossing sea  
Uprear the Saviour's Cross, and on the Rock  
Of Ages stand ; 'tis vain to trust in princes,  
Vain to give up our work to hired soldiers.  
He calls us now to follow Him, to go  
E'en as He went, and call to all to come  
Where only rest is found. Let all men know  
That we can work for Him Who died for us,  
Enduring till the end ; so shall the clouds

Disperse, and heavenly calm return again.

*Uberto.* Yes, this is very well ; but it is time  
We had some dinner, surely (*going*).

*Dante.* Stay a moment !  
You told me Ezzelin had a pious sister—  
What is her name ?

*Uberto.* Her name, I think, is Lucia.  
She is a sister in a convent here ;  
But Annette knows far more of her than I do,  
They used to be great friends.

*Dante.* And is this Ezzelin  
Fond of his sister ?

*Uberto.* Yes, devoted to her,  
And she adores him too.

*Dante.* Then I will go  
And see her ; sisters often have great influence  
Upon their brothers. So, farewell. [*Exit DANTE.*

*Uberto.* What, go  
All that way fasting ? what a zealous man !  
I wish I had such energy. But surely  
Our meal must be prepared. [*Exit UBERTO.*



SCENE 4. *A Cell in the Convent of St. Margaret.**Enter LUCIA, alone.**Lucia.*

THE sun is slowly sinking in the west,  
Over the gleaming sea ; as he goes down,  
He paints the clouds around him with the  
hues

Of amber, gold, and crimson, while afar  
The snowy eastern cloud groups faintly glow  
With rosy tints. The quiet time of eve  
Comes on apace, and soon the silver moon  
Will rise above the distant woods. How sweet  
The air is now ! I ever yet have loved  
The eventide more than the glare of day.  
For this is not my rest, nor would I have it ;  
Yet e'en as children love the time which tells  
Of coming joys, so in the evening's calm  
I fain would shadow forth the eternal peace  
Which comes, when in the chilly waves of death  
Life's sun is set, and He shall bid me welcome  
Who bids me work for Him beneath the Cross.

'Tis growing dark ; the compline hour draws near,  
Blest hour of prayer, which calls each child of God  
To bend before the Crucified.

*Enter JULIA.*

*Julia.* My sister,  
An aged priest desires to speak with you ;  
He waits without.

*Lucia.* Then bid him come, my sister.  
Who may this priest be ? 'tis some stranger, surely.  
[*Exit JULIA.*

*Enter JULIA with DANTE.*

*Julia.* This is the sister Lucia, reverend father.  
[*Exit JULIA.*

*Dante.* Hail to thee, daughter ! I have come  
to-night  
From Arnold's castle, where my home has been  
The last few days. I am an old acquaintance  
Of your renowned father, Lord Alonzo.

*Lucia.* A friend of my dear father ! can you be  
The Father Dante ?

*Dante.* Even so, my daughter.

*Lucia.* Oh ! then you are no stranger ; I have  
heard

My father often speak of you : he loves you  
And honours you, and he has ever wish'd  
That I might know you too.

*Dante.* Well, now you see me.

You are Alonzo's daughter, I his friend ;  
Methinks we need no further introduction.  
But, in good truth, I should not have supposed  
That I should find you here.

*Lucia.* Why not, my father ?

*Dante.* Daughter, Alonzo often used to say  
That he would never let a child of his  
Enter a convent.

*Lucia.* Yes ; but when my brother  
Left us to travel—but indeed I ought not  
To trouble you.

*Dante.* Fear not ; speak on, my child.

*Lucia.* My father ever did oppose my brother  
In his pursuit of Arnold's daughter, Annette ;  
And when poor Ezzelin left us, Lord Alonzo  
Blamed me for having introduced my brother  
To Annette ; but indeed I did not mean  
To injure Ezzelin—she was my friend,  
We loved each other dearly from our childhood,  
And Ezzelin used to join us in our sports

(For he was never happy save with me—  
Whate'er I loved he loved, and so with Annette).  
When childhood's guileless time was past, new  
feelings

Came o'er my brother and my friend, the seeds  
Of fondness sown in childhood bloom'd at last  
When youth arrived into the flower of love.  
Yet, oh ! what should a maiden vow'd to heaven  
Know of such feelings ? [*Turns away.*

*Dante (smiling).* Do not grieve, my daughter ;  
It is no sin to *tell* of earthly love  
In other hearts, so that it does not taint  
Our own.

*Lucia.* But, father, sometimes my weak heart is  
touch'd  
By the sweet poison.

*Dante.* Yes, the Via Crucis  
Is ever mark'd by earth's affections strewn  
Along its tear-stain'd soil, yet doth it lead  
To that bright land where love may freely burn  
In pure unearthly glory. Every tear  
Wrung from the eyes of those who here below  
Have torn themselves from love as if from life,  
Turns to a pearl to star the coronet

Laid up for them above, and each new triumph  
Shall gild with added glory that fair crown  
They cast before His feet who died for them.

*Lucia.* Yes, if they freely give themselves to  
God.

*Dante.* And is it otherwise with you, my daughter?  
Are you placed here against your will?

*Lucia.* No, father,  
When Ezzelin left us I was forced to leave  
Our home ; my father said that I had ruin'd  
My brother's prospects, and he could not bear  
To have me with him,—so I took the veil,  
And now am reconciled to this my life ;  
Nor would I change it, yet I cannot say  
That freely I laid down youth's joys and pleasures  
Before the cross, and sometimes vain regrets  
Disturb my soul.

*Dante.* “Let the dead bury their dead,  
And follow me.” See from above thy couch  
The Crucified smiles on thy daily path.  
A brighter smile shall greet thee when at last  
Thou layest down thy burden at His feet.  
And canst thou tell if to meek constancy  
And sweet obedience in the course decreed

For thee, as fair a crown may yet be given  
As gleams on those who from their earliest youth  
Have borne the virgin's lamp. 'Tis easier far  
When Heaven calls us on the way we love  
Than when the path demands a sacrifice. . . .  
But I have come to-day from Arnold's castle  
On special business with you. Have you heard  
Of Ezzelin or Annette?

*Lucia.* Yes, my father ;  
Annette has been to see me once or twice.

*Dante.* And did you think that she was changed  
at all?

*Lucia.* No, not at all. She was the same as  
ever,—

A gentle, trusting girl.

*Dante.* Is she religious?

*Lucia.* I think so; but you seem to doubt a  
little!

*Dante.* I do. I fear that Annette is too fond  
Of dreaming to be safe. She may be gentle,  
But she is given to questioning what the Church  
Lays down. But what of Ezzelin, your brother ;  
Is he a faithful son of Rome?

*Lucia.* Oh, yes ;

He always has been so ; most true and fervent  
In his devotion to our glorious Church !

*Dante.* Thank God for that ! Know you not that  
your brother

Intends, ere long, to wed with Arnold's daughter ?

*Lucia.* Oh, father ! he will never gain consent.  
My sire always did oppose their union.  
I do in truth believe that such a marriage  
Would drive him to the grave ; he fondly hoped  
That Ezzelin would soon forget his love.

For me, I know not what to say ; my father  
Is dear to me, I would not have him suffer.  
Yet Ezzelin will never know what joy is  
Until he weds his youthful love. But tell me,  
May a son thus provoke a father's curse ;  
For Ezzelin will endure his father's anger  
If they are wed ?

*Dante.* Daughter ! the ties of love  
Are stronger than the bands of prejudice.  
There is no reason for your father's hatred  
Of Annette. Ezzelin has sworn to love her.  
He may not break that oath and shun the vengeance  
Of Heaven ; and Alonzo has no right  
To curse him. Curses, sent without the sanction

Of God, are powerless as summer lightning,  
Which flashes midst the clouds, but cannot dart  
A forkèd bolt to earth—But do not weep.

*Lucia.* I cannot help it. Oh, I vainly hoped  
That God would smooth our troubles. I have  
pray'd

So often that my father's life might be  
Shielded from sorrow ; for, although he sent me  
Away from him, he is my father still.  
Indeed, he thought that I had injured Ezzelin ;  
He did not mean to be unjust. My father—  
You can do much, I know—go with my brother  
To Lord Alonzo, he will hear *you* speak ;  
Use your best arts ; tell him that Ezzelin's happiness  
Is centred in this union. He will grant  
Consent at last, I hope ; and if he does not,  
Why then they *must* be wed. But oh, I doubt  
If Annette's love will prove a consolation  
To Ezzelin for his father's wrath. But why  
Look you so pain'd ; have *I* in aught offended ?  
Forgive me if I have.

*Dante (with a sad smile).* No ; as you spoke  
A bitter shaft of memory touch'd my soul.  
Lucia ! thou art not like thy stalwart father ;



Whom dost thou most resemble?

*Lucia.* Before my hair  
Was shorn away beneath the convent shears,  
They used to tell me that my face was like  
A sister of my father's.

*Dante (in an agitated voice).* And her name?

*Lucia.* Her name was Viola ; she died in Spain,  
Long, long ago.

*Dante.* Yes, many years have pass'd  
Since then ; yet, Lucia, hearken. I desire  
To have her name remember'd in thy prayers.  
Wilt thou do this for me?—Now, to our business.  
You have well spoken, I will see Alonzo ;  
But, ere your brother marry, it were well  
He saw you, for you know that wives have influence  
Over their husbands. Ezzelin may be faithful,  
But Annette may give way. Foul heresy  
Prowls round the Church, like wolf around the fold,  
Seeking God's children, and perhaps might taint  
Her wavering heart. Now, if you met your brother,  
And told him in a sweet and tender manner  
Of these our doubts, his eyes would soon be open'd,  
And he would watch her well. From you, my  
daughter,

Such words would better come than from myself.

*Lucia.* But how can I arrange a meeting, father?  
Men may not enter here.

*Dante.* I will arrange it.

*(The bell tolls.)*

But, hark ! the bell tolls out the compline hour,  
And we must part.

*Lucia.* But grant me ere you go  
Your blessing. [*Kneels, and folds her hands.*

*Dante (laying his hand on her head).* May the  
Heavenly Spouse of Virgins  
Fill thee with His pure love while through the world  
Thou walkest ; may He give thee grace to follow  
Where'er He wills, in joy or agony ;  
May He sustain thee, and when time is past,  
And at St. Margaret's side thy throne is set,  
May God's own hand upon thy virgin brow  
For ever place His coronet unfading.

[*Exeunt DANTE and LUCIA.*

SCENE 5. *A room in Arnold's Castle.*

ANNETTE *looking out of window.*

*Annette.*



THIS very dark to-night ; the sable clouds  
Are hurrying o'er the sky in rapid flight,  
Driven before the wind ; around the moon  
They crowd, like sorrows o'er the path of love,  
Dimming her glory and at times obscuring  
Her silver round, yet evermore she shines  
More lovely than before, and e'en the clouds  
That fain would hide her face are gently touch'd  
By her soft radiance ; so the bitter troubles  
That close around a lover oft are soften'd  
By the sweet light of pure devotion's moon.  
Oh ! what is trouble, what are pain or grief  
That meet us in love's spring-time ? Then our  
thoughts  
Are not our own, we share another's heart.  
We think, whene'er we see a thing of beauty,  
“ What would he think of it ?—how would he like it ? ”  
Till in that path divine we lose our hearts  
And think with his, gaze with his eyes, and feel

His pleasures or his griefs ; and thus my life  
Will be surrender'd to my Ezzelin.

If he return ! Oh, cruel, cruel IF !

On that short word my coming fate depends.

I will not doubt it, lest distraction seize

My heart. Oh, Ezzelin, Ezzelin ! dearest love,

Say, are you coming ? does yon cloud-girt moon

Silver the white sails of the happy bark

That bears you home ? *[ Turns to the fire. ]*

The flame has faded now,

And the hot embers cast a deep red glow

Upon the tapestry that shakes and sways

In the night wind, the arras-painted figures

Look as if once again in life they moved.

The embroider'd horses champ the bit, the  
knights

Look up to their fair ladies ere they couch

The deadly lance, that scene so often view'd

Brings back the memories of happy days.

Would that the future, like the past, could open

To those who long for joy ; yet when he comes

All will be well, these weeks of grief and sorrow

Will seem as nothing then. But I am weary,

Weary with watching here. Come to me, Sleep,

And bid me dream of Ezzelin. What, if waking,  
I find him by me? [*Lies down and sleeps.*]

(*Enter EZZELIN.*)

*Ezzelin.* At last, I stand within the castle walls,  
And breathe the air she breathes. Each little thing  
That calls *her* Mistress, glows before my eyes.

(*Seeing her.*) And there she lies. The darkness  
cannot blind

The eyes of true affection. Ah ! she sleeps.  
Like some still mountain-lake she seems, whose  
waters

Look loveliest in repose. Oh ! would that I  
Were master o'er her dreams. [*Sits down by the couch.*]

I'll linger here

And feast my eyes with beauty. God of sleep,  
Delay not here too long ! She stirs and murmurs.  
What does she say ? I will not spoil her rest.  
Down, down, impatient spirit. See, she moves,  
Her eyelids open, yet sleep lingers still,  
Dulling their stainless azure. Come, love ! Annette !  
It is no blissful dream—I am beside thee !

[*Bends over her. She starts up and flings  
her arms round his neck.*]

*Annette.* 'Tis he! 'tis he! I see thee once again,  
My own, my dearest Ezzelin; but this moment  
I dreamt I saw thee lying cold and dead  
Upon the straw of some drear castle chamber;  
And, as I gazed on thee, a voice exclaim'd,  
"This is thy work!" and, shuddering, I awoke,  
And thou wert here. It was my latest wish,  
Ere slumber came, that when I woke thy form  
Might greet my eyes. Thou wilt not leave me now?  
Go not away again. I have so much  
To tell thee, and to hear from thee, and yet  
Words will not come, I only sit and look,  
Feeling that this, alone, is perfect bliss.

*Ezzelin.* Yes, Annette, six long years seem little  
now  
Beside thee. Thou art just the same as ever.  
Why art thou troubled? Why that look of pain  
Upon thy face?

*Annette.* Ezzelin, that horrid dream!

*Ezzelin.* What then? our dreams are naught  
save fancy's work.

*Annette.* But sometimes they come true, you  
know.

*Ezzelin.* Hush, dearest!

No more of this ; shall this our hour of meeting  
Be aught but joy !

*Annette.* I hear steps on the stairs.  
They come to spoil our meeting ; it is hard  
We cannot be alone a little while.

*Enter* ARNOLD, DANTE, UBERTO, SEBASTIAN, *and*  
SERVANTS, *with lights.* ANNETTE *springs up,*  
*rushes up to her father, and throws herself into*  
*his arms.*

And you are safe, dear father ! Heaven has kept you  
From every hurt.

*Arnold.* Not quite unscathed, my daughter.  
*Annette (turning pale).* What is the matter,  
then?

*Arnold.* A trifling wound,  
Given by a dying pirate as I strode  
O'er his body. Do not look so white :  
Is this the smile you ought to wear when Ezzelin  
Returns at last ? Come, Ezzelin, comfort her.

(EZZELIN *advances and stands by* ANNETTE.)

It does me good to see you two together.

Look, reverend fathers, there's a well-match'd pair.

*Ezzelin.* Father Uberto, you, I trust, are well ;  
'Tis long since I have seen you.

*Uberto.* Yes, my son,  
I think I'm well, but I am growing old,  
And people do not treat me as they ought,  
But shun my counsel.

*Arnold.* Father, what mean you ?

*Uberto.* Why, Mistress Annette does not treat  
me well,  
She gets quite forward now.

*Arnold.* Annette, for shame !  
How can you bear yourself like this, my child ?  
It is not maidenly.

*Dante (in a low voice to Arnold).* Do not question her.

She did not mean to be insulting ; grief  
And sharp suspense oft make us lose command  
Over our tongues. (*Aloud to Uberto.*) Come, brother,  
do not speak

About the matter now. Pray pardon her.

(*Stepping forward to EZZELIN.*) You are the son of  
Lord Alonzo, Ezzelin.



Have you heard mention of my name by him?

*Ezzelin (aside).* Why is it that they cease to rail  
at Annette

When he forbids it? Priests are ever busy  
On other men's affairs. I must be wary,  
Or he will gain her heart. (*Aloud.*) Your pardon,  
father.

Are you the Father Dante?

*Dante.* Yes, the same,  
Your father's friend. I have already seen  
Your sister at her convent, and now wish  
To know you, too, my son.

*Ezzelin.* Surely, my father,  
I shall be very glad.

*Dante.* Your young betroth'd  
And I are friends already, Ezzelin.

*Annette.* Yes, Ezzelin, he has been very kind  
To me while you were captive, but I fain  
Would hear your story.

*Ezzelin (looking round).* Are you all willing,  
friends?

*Arnold.* Ay, let us hear it.

*Ezzelin.* After the day on which I sail'd from  
Venice

I gave myself to travelling, and journey'd  
Through several countries, and at last I reach'd  
The Imperial Court, meaning to push my fortunes  
In Royal Charles's service ; but the intrigues  
Of jealous courtiers baffled all my plans.  
At last, indignant, with my sword I met  
And slew an officer whose slanderous tongue  
Aspersed me to his master ; then, unchampion'd  
By those in power, I was forced to flee.  
Where should I turn ? War open'd out to me  
Some hope of fame, so with the French I march'd  
To Pavia's bloody field ; there taken captive  
With luckless Francis, I was kept awhile  
Close prisoner. At last, released, I sought  
The princely court of Saxony's Elector.  
(DANTE *frowns*.) There I remain'd until his death,  
and then  
Return'd towards Italy, meaning to come  
Again to you ; but on the way our vessel  
Was taken by the Turks, and all the crew,  
Myself among the number, thrown in chains  
Into the hold, until your rescue came.  
*Arnold.* We had a desperate fight ; the Turks  
withstood

Our onset with the fury of despair.

Five times they drove us back, at last we gain'd  
The deck and flesh'd our blades in Paynim blood.  
I never shall forget how Turk and Christian  
Reel'd in the death-grasp on the heaving deck  
Slippery with blood. The dark Mahometans  
Gave way at last as the brave sons of Venice  
Press'd on, with dripping swords, the while the  
surge

Boil'd round the vessels, as the strife wax'd hot,  
And many a bleeding corpse was thrown to feed  
The hungry waves, and, but a little distance  
From where we fought, the blue sharks hung  
suspended

Beneath the sea, the destined tombs of those  
Who fell in battle.

*Esselin.*                   Where we lay we heard  
Your war-cry, and with anxious hearts awaited  
The issue of the conflict, and we strain'd  
Our ears to listen to the shouts and tramping  
And clash of deadly steel. At last I loosed  
My chains, and broke away and reach'd the deck  
Just as the Turks were clustering round the mast  
For one last struggle.

*Sebastian.* Yes, young Ezzelin came,  
Like a young boar amidst the tawny caitiffs,  
And by my soul I think he gored a few!

*Dante.* Enough of tales of war. Do you not see  
Annette is looking pale? what do you purpose  
To do, young Ezzelin, now?

*Ezzelin.* To seek my father  
Ere many hours have pass'd. I trust that he  
Will grant my earnest wish. But, hark! the bell  
Calls us away.

[*Exeunt all but EZZELIN and ANNETTE.*]

*Annette.* Oh, Ezzelin, must you leave me?

*Ezzelin.* Dearest Annette,  
'Tis but awhile I go; when I return  
Then ne'er on earth again, I trust, shall we  
Be parted. I *must* go to-morrow.

*Annette.* Ezzelin,  
Can you not wait awhile, after to-morrow  
Will be the feast-day of my patroness.  
Can you not stay for that?

*Ezzelin.* Your patroness!  
Then you will be at the confessional  
To-morrow?

*Annette.* Yes, but not to our good chaplain;

I shall confess to Father Dante. Hark !  
My father calls. Come with me then, dear Ezzelin.  
You must be friends with Dante. Were all priests  
But like him earth would be indeed like heaven.  
Now, do not linger, we must come away.

*End of First Act.*





## ACT II.

### SCENE I. *The Castle Chapel.*

DANTE *seated.* ANNETTE *standing by him.*

*Dante.*



Y daughter, you have now, I trust, confessed

Your sins, and show'd to me your inmost soul.

What shall I say? One thought alone has fill'd  
Your heart, one name is written on your soul,  
The name of Ezzelin. And will you give  
All, all to him—have you no other service  
Save to your lover? Do we sojourn here  
Only for carnal love? I tell you this,  
That love unsanctified will prove a curse,  
An ulcerous sore, eating the better nature.  
All that is good and pure will be dissolved

By the hot passion ; yet the love itself  
Will turn to dust and ashes.

*Annette.* Father, father,  
You are too hard. Can that be very bad  
Which makes us ready to endure all pain,  
All disappointment, for another's sake,  
And count our ease and joy of no account  
Compared with his ?

*Dante.* 'Tis in this way that such as you, my  
daughter,  
Deceive yourselves, when love in all its youth  
First burns within you ; then you kiss the sword,  
And think its point is honied ; but hereafter,  
When the first flame dies out, in many cases  
Your hearts grow cold. Where, then, are all the  
boasts

Of perfect self-devotion to your partner,  
Of meek obedience to his slightest wish,  
Of constant self-denial, gladly bearing  
All grief and pain, so only he be happy ?  
Gone, with the dreams of youth in which they sprang.

*Annette.* Forgive me, father.  
May I but ask one question ?

*Dante.* Speak, my daughter.

*Annette.* 'Tis strange to me that one like you, a  
priest,

Vow'd to a single life, should thus exhort me ;  
And, with all reverence to your sacred office,  
I marvel greatly whence you learnt the secrets  
Of such a thing as love?

*Dante (in a changed voice).* Annette, Annette,  
I never thought to have unlock'd my heart,  
But I will tell *you*, daughter. Listen well,  
And know that he who stands before you now,  
Clad in the sacred garments of the altar,  
Once loved, and may the fearful tale I tell you  
Sink deeply in your soul. Down, down, weak heart !  
*I will—I will!* O Saviour, for Thy sake,  
To warn this child of Thine from heresy,  
I tell this story ; let my heart-strings bleed,  
And let the hidden secrets of my soul  
Endure the searching day, the agony  
Of all too keen remembrance, so I save  
*One* soul for whom Thy precious blood was shed.

*Annette (speaking in a terrified voice).* O ! father,  
do not tell me ; I have err'd.

My wicked, wicked scorn and unbelief  
Have caused me thus to wound thee.



*Dante (sternly).* Silence, daughter.

I loved her once, a timid, shrinking girl,  
With azure eyes, clear as the noonday sea,  
Soft raven hair, and neck as white as snow.  
I see her now before me with a look  
Of agony upon her lovely face,  
Blacken'd with smoke ; and o'er her white-robed form  
The yellow flames are leaping ! Oh ! depart  
Vision of horror, in the name of Him  
For whom I did it. . . . .

Annette, I loved her ! and she knew it well.  
Born of a fall'n house, I could not wed her ;  
Wealth was not mine. I sought the wild career  
Of arms, and trusted there to gain renown,  
And then return to win her. How I prosper'd  
The world knows well ; nor does it suit that I—  
Vow'd unto Him Who pray'd for those who slew  
Him—

Should boast to thee of the high fame I won  
On many a bloody field ; at last, my aim  
Achieved, I sought the brother of my love,  
And ask'd his sister's hand. Ah ! 'twas in vain :  
She had been faithful, but her iron brother  
Had sold her to a German Duke, to gain

A few bare acres. She was gone ! I saw  
The hand of God was heavy on my life.  
So, deeming that He will'd it, I laid down  
Before the Cross the warrior's helm and blade,  
And hid my sorrows in the robe of serge.  
Say, dost *thou* ask *me* if I ever loved?  
Bear witness nights of racking agony !  
Bear witness torturing dreams, when at the altar  
I stood beside her, and those azure eyes  
Gazed into mine ! The lonely years roll'd on,  
And I stood high among my brethren,  
A leader 'mid the captains of the faithful.  
Yet, like a lofty oak by lightning blasted,  
'Mid verdant beeches or green underwood,  
I tower'd above the rest ; so when at last  
Dark heresy rear'd up its serpent head,  
We form'd the Inquisition, to protect  
The faithful from its snares, and power was given  
To me to judge the wretched ones who spurn'd  
The Lord Who died for them. Amidst the number  
Of those who would not yield I found *her*, Annette,  
The loved and lost. O ! that my lips should tell  
This tale of tenfold horror—bear with me ;  
*I* sentenced her to die, *I* bade the deaths-men

Strip her young form, and bind her tightly down  
Upon the straining rack, until the blood  
Oozed from her naked limbs, and those pure lips  
Were blue with agony ; she knew me not,  
But *I*, more wretched, heard her piercing cries  
And wails of anguish, as the biting cords  
Tore at the joints and wrench'd the tender frame,  
Till the fierce pain exhausted all its store,  
And faintness came upon her ; then they loosed  
The blood-stain'd ropes, and bore her to her cell,  
Only to live a few short days of pain.  
Then the black stake was rear'd ! I see it now !  
The years have roll'd away ! My brain will burst  
With the fierce conflict, yet the faith shall conquer.

*Annette.* I cannot bear this dreadful story, father ;  
Yet I must listen. O ! had you the heart  
To see her burn ?

*Dante (leaping up).* Yes, yes ; I stood beside  
The stake while she was fasten'd, and the wood  
Heap'd up around, but as the hooded butchers  
Lighted the pile, she gazed upon my face,  
And knew me. O ! those straining eyes, they pierced  
My writhing heart ; but then the smoke leap'd up,  
And the dry wood 'gan crackle with the heat

Of the red, hungry flames. I raised my eyes  
(I would not look, though midst the roaring flames  
I heard her call my name) to where on high  
Above the smoke the image of the Christ  
Upon the wall behind was hung ;—methought  
The pale, sad brow look'd stern, the eyes were bent  
In pitying indignation on my face ;  
Then I could see no longer, and my head  
Grew dizzy, and I fell ; and when my senses  
Return'd, I only saw a blacken'd heap  
Of ashes, that was all. Amidst those cinders  
Lay all my dream of love, and yet I tell you  
I never loved her more than when I bade  
Those scorching flames consume her graceful form.  
For God will punish sin, and earthly flame  
May save from endless fire ; remember this,  
Thou who now shudderest at my tale of anguish.  
Perhaps she thanks me now. O grant it, Lord !  
Dread Judge, have mercy on me, and receive her  
Into Thy arms at last, her sin wash'd out  
By Thy redeeming blood. . . . .  
Thus, Annette, ask yourself, *do I not know*  
A lover's pangs ? can I not counsel thee ?  
My love was e'en as thine, the fruit of passion,

And when it took a better, truer form,  
God proved it thus ! O ! ask of him, my child,  
To grant thee His own gift of perfect love,  
And fear not, when thou kneelest at His feet,  
To tell Him all ; the Virgin's Son knows well  
The tender feelings of a virgin's soul.  
Now go, for I would be alone. [*Exit* ANNETTE.]

She knows not

Alonzo's sister ; in my breast alone  
Lies the dread secret, yet I fain would have her—  
Annette, I mean—know that I shall not shrink  
From any duty ; so, if she be wise,  
She will not doubt the faith ; and knowing this,  
She may warn Ezzelin, also, if his heart,  
As I suspect, has drunken in the lies  
Of that accursèd Luther ; but I must cease.  
It was God's will. Shall I repine ? a man  
Complain because the Father wills to punish  
His sins ? Nay, it is just ; and when the cord  
Is loosed, and this poor body, wearied out,  
Seeks its last bed, may I not meet again  
The lost one, and behold that angel face  
Sinless before His throne,—no longer stain'd  
With tears, as when she lay upon the rack,

Suffering her punishment, but joyful, wearing  
 Heaven's radiant smile? May she not come to  
     meet me,  
 And stretch her hands with earnest thankfulness  
 Towards me for that sharp and fiery torture,  
 Which purged away the sin, and bade her enter  
 In the bright land where tears are wiped away !  
[*Exit.*

SCENE 2. *The Vestibule outside the Chapel.*

*Enter EZZELIN.*

*Ezzelin.*



WHY comes she not? The sun is riding  
     high  
 In heaven's deep azure, and my time is  
     short.

That priest is keeping her from me ; *he* knows not  
 A lover's pangs who waits to bid adieu.

Will she be there all day? Why, by my soul,  
 Her sins cannot be many : would I were  
 There to confess her ! Still no sound or motion ;  
 I cannot stay much longer. Hark ! I hear

Her gentle footstep on the marble floor.  
No, 'tis my fancy. That old father Dante  
Seems fond of hearing her ; small blame to him  
To dote on Annette, everyone who sees her  
Loves her. I would I dared to interrupt them,  
But no, I must not try it. Father Dante,  
Be quick, I pray you ; I am waiting here !  
Hark ! 'tis a footfall now ; by Heaven, she comes !  
I thought I heard a sob,—yes, there again.  
What has he said to her ? O God ! those priests !  
No wonder men have oped their eyes at last,  
And soon will spurn their bondage.

*Enter ANNETTE, weeping.*

*Ezzelin (folding her to his breast).* Dearest  
Annette,  
What is your grief ? What moves you thus to weep ?  
Tell me, my own !

*Annette.* No, no ; I must not, can not.

*Ezzelin.* Nay, but you must. O do not sob like  
that ;

Has your confessor been severe ? But fear not,  
A few short years——

*Annette.* Nay, Ezzelin, for shame !

Do not speak thus ; but oh ! I here beseech you,  
Offend *him* not.

*Ezzelin.*                      Who, dearest ?

*Annette.*    Father Dante.

O ! you had better rush upon a line  
Of pointed spears than strive to have your way  
When he forbids it ; he is one whose power  
Is only equall'd by his resolution.  
And if he thought to serve the Church of God,  
Naught could prevail against his iron will ;  
Love, pity, kindness, would be cast aside,—  
Of that I'm sure.

*Ezzelin.*                      Now, Annette, list awhile ;  
And by your love to me, I charge you here  
Betray me not. If but thy lips should speak  
One word of what I tell thee, my young life  
Would instantly be crush'd. But are we safe  
From observation here ?

*Annette.*    No one comes here  
Save those who seek the chapel. Padre Uberto  
Is fast asleep. I think this place is safe,—  
At least, as safe as any. Father Dante  
Left by another door soon after I did,—  
At least, as down the vestibule I came



I heard his footsteps as he pass'd that way,  
And then the door was slowly shut.

*Ezzelin.*

Sit down

Beside me, dear. You know to-day I go  
To seek my father, and I hope indeed  
To win him to my side. If not, I purpose  
To push my fortunes in the Saxon Court,  
And find a home for thee. Since first I left you  
The world has changed. We stand upon the  
brink

Of a great crisis. Soon the storm will come,  
And Superstition with her thralling chains  
Be swept away. Already in the North  
Men are preparing for the contest dire,  
When Truth and Error face to face must meet.  
The German race is not like ours, inert  
And satisfied with spiritual bondage ;  
Their brains are keen to rend away the veil,  
And view all things. Thou, love, hast often seen  
How, ere the dawn, the darkest hour comes.  
That hour is passing : Truth's bright sun will rise  
In perfect glory, for the morning star  
Shines bright already.

*Annette.*

You are very strange.

What can you mean by Truth's bright sun, my  
Ezzelin?

Have you pick'd up these notions in the North?  
I do not like you to be serious  
And thus abstracted.

*Ezzelin.* Are you satisfied  
To be no other than a captive, led  
In priestly chains, and ever more believe  
All that priests tell you, Annette?

*Annette.* Wherefore not?

*Ezzelin.* Does not your fancy sometimes strive  
against  
These spiritual laws, and long to know  
*Why* these things are, to search uncheck'd, un-  
hinder'd,  
The boundless plains of knowledge?

*Annette.* Never yet  
Have I been eager after knowledge,—love  
Is all I crave.

*Ezzelin.* Yet, even *love* is chain'd ;  
The so-call'd Church is mistress over this.  
Does all you have been taught seem right and good?

*Annette.* You speak not as you did, my soul is  
fearful.

What would you have me tell you?

*Ezzelin.*

This, in short,

Say,—have you ever doubted?

*Annette.*

Yes! a little.

*Ezzelin.* And so have I; and now I know your  
faith

Is worse than none.

*Annette.*

O, Ezzelin! what mean you?

*Ezzelin.* A miserable lie, a rotten system

For gaining power over human souls,—

Such is the faith of Rome. I tell you freely,

I do not—will not hold it; and, my Annette,

You shall not hold it either.

*Annette.*

Ezzelin!

*Ezzelin.* Ay, you are frighten'd; but you need  
not fear:

I will instruct you in the new belief,

For I have stood and heard the burning words

Of one who, once a monk, has burst his fetters—

The Doctor Luther!

*Annette (making the sign of the cross).* What! the  
heretic?

*Ezzelin.* So many call him; and his enemies

Would shed his blood, but that full many a German

Is ready to protect him. I will fight !  
I, Ezzelin ! in his quarrel. He has friends  
In many a German Court ; to them I'll go,  
If Lord Alonzo will not do me right.  
You shall see Luther too.

*Enter DANTE suddenly.*

[EZZELIN] *springs to his feet with a gesture towards  
his sword ; ANNETTE starts back in dismay.*

*Dante.* Yes, at the stake !  
Unless he teaches other doctrines ! Ezzelin,  
I heard you speak of that apostate monk ;  
Say, do you know him ?

*Ezzelin.* Yes, I know him well !

*Dante.* And like him too ?

*Ezzelin.* Yes !

*Dante.* Well, the man can talk ;  
And doubtless what he teaches is attractive  
To ardent minds like yours. The faith of Christ  
Is far too poor for lofty intellects ;  
You must know more.

*Ezzelin.* The doctor says he teaches  
That faith of Christ.

*Dante (frowning).* And do you think so too ?

*Ezzelin.* How should I know? I am no  
theologian,  
But I seek knowledge, and he promises  
To teach men that.

*Dante.* Knowledge of good and evil?

*Ezzelin.* Yes, I suppose so !

*Dante.* So did some one else  
Of whom the Scriptures tell. Yet speak, my son ;  
If you have doubts, I trust *I* can explain them.  
Fear not to tell your troubles,—but, my daughter,  
You must depart.

*Annette.* Yes, father. Farewell, Ezzelin.  
Oh ! I shall count the moments till you come  
Back from your journey. (*Comes forward and em-  
braces him, whispering.*)

Ezzelin, beware ! he's an inquisitor.

*Ezzelin.* Farewell, my best, my dearest, loveliest !  
[*Exit* ANNETTE.]

*Dante.* Now hearken, son. I know the mind oft  
beats  
Against the bars of faith ; but when the body  
Would run to riot, virtuous youths restrain it.  
Why not the mind as well ? The faith of Luther  
Is one which speaks to intellect alone,

And not to holiness. A mere belief  
In what few doubt is all that *he* requires.  
He says that Christ has bought us with His  
blood,  
And through that all-sufficing work our deeds,  
Either for good or evil, do not matter,  
So only we believe. Is this a faith  
To raise a world thus steep'd in wickedness?  
Think well of this, young Ezzelin. The serpent  
Said, "Ye shall be as gods; ye shall not die  
Through sin." Such was his teaching; endless  
woe

Was the result.—But now I see you wish  
To go. Farewell! and may the perfect wisdom  
Of the all-gracious Spirit fill your heart,  
And ever guard you in the narrow way,—  
The only one that leads to endless life.


*Ezzelin (coldly).* Farewell! [*Exit EZZELIN.*]

*Dante.* I thought as much,—he has embraced  
The doctrines of that cursèd renegade.  
A shrewd suspicion cross'd my mind when he  
Spoke of his sojourn at the Elector's Court.  
'Tis well! They *shall* not wed! I'll to Alonzo,  
And urge him to forbid it. If the youth

Refuse to yield, his doom must be the flame.  
Yet even so may Annette's soul be saved.  
She must not wed a heretic !—Ho ! Andreas.  
He is not there ; I must go forth and seek him.

SCENE 3. ALONZO'S *Castle. A room.* ALONZO  
*alone, walking up and down.*

*Alonzo.*

 KNOW not how it is, my heart is heavy  
With grave foreboding of a coming ill,  
And yet my state is rich, and, while I live,  
Will ever flourish, for I stand alone,  
Yet always ready, and my will is such  
That none may thwart me. Though my trusty  
soldiers  
Are few, yet still I fear not mutiny,  
For, by a little show of firm resolve,  
I fetter down the hate of thousand hearts,  
And, by a scanty force of men obedient,  
Thousand unruly hearts are stay'd in terror,  
While one wise man rules,—lord. Such is Fate's law,  
That passions wild shall shrink before firm reason—  
Reason that fears no ill, and feels no pity !  
Such is the life I lead—war, war for ever.

Fear curbs down hate. Those that hate much, fear  
more,

And cowering, first in dread, find out thereafter  
Obedience is a gain ; while all good men,  
Preserved from riotous ills, bless the firm hand  
That binds them but to shield them. Yet to me  
What gain is this ? The love that kind hearts  
moves,

The unrestrained joyousness of speech  
With those no more than us ; the joyousness  
Of those, whom deeds severe, whom iron sternness  
Have not cut off from the fresh thoughts of innocence,

Can never more be mine ! Cliffs that face tempests  
Are doom'd to barrenness ; yet, like a cliff,  
I'll bear my rock-bound front, and face, unmoved,  
The scowls of hate, the sneers of dark revenge,  
The cruelty of loneliness, the terrors  
Which, like an enemy in some citadel,  
Within the heart itself spread waste and ruin,  
And lured by proud Ambition's tempting bait,  
By Hope's sure guidance, by the consciousness  
Of great deeds done, all foes without, within,  
I'll face them and I'll rout them ; thus a name



I'll leave for time to tell ; and to my son  
I'll leave a sure possession won from discord  
By my undaunted toil. Men used to say  
That he had all my virtues, and united  
A gentleness his own. I grudge him naught.  
So may Alonzo's name and that of Ezzelin—  
Of him who won and him who ruled and prosper'd,  
Of him who curb'd a mutinous State to order,  
Of him who led an order'd State in happiness,  
Of him who men had slain because they fear'd him,  
Of him whom men obey'd because they loved him,  
Pass side by side together. Yet two things—  
Two things alone I ask for—Heaven grant them !—  
That I may see him ere I die, and he  
O'er-rule that luckless love which else may ruin  
him.

Love, thou wert born the enemy of all good,  
The world-deep curse, the deadly foe of reason.

(*Enter GONZALO.*)

*Gonzalo.* My lord, the father Dante waits without.

*Alonzo.* Admit him instantly. [*Exit GONZALO.*  
Why comes *he* here ?

But I must always keep the Church's favour.  
The fear of endless punishment does much  
To hold in check the rabble. Here he comes.

(*Enter DANTE.*)

Welcome, my friend, I'm truly glad to see you.

*Dante.* And so am I, Alonzo, thus to meet you.  
We have not met for nearly ten long years.

*Alonzo.* It must be that at least; do you re-  
member

How first we met? Yet why recall that time?

I own to you I grieve to think on it.

I wrong'd you, Dante, sorely; but, alas!

Pride and ambition's freezing snows aye hang

Around the crest of him who strives to rise

Above his fellow-creatures. Yes, I err'd,

And, as you know, I sold her to a stranger,

Hoping to gain fresh strength. Poor Viola!

A few short years ago she pass'd away.

Yet why recall that time?

*Dante (sadly).* Ah! why, indeed?

*Alonzo.* They said she died in Spain; but no  
one knows.

She disappear'd, I know not where she lies.

In vain I sent a trusty courier  
To search the matter out.—Your pardon, Dante ;  
I fear I've wounded you !

*Dante.* Some wounds of youth  
Are quickly heal'd ; but others, Lord Alonzo,  
Death only cures ; but, for her sake and mine,  
Speak not again of this. I've lately come  
From Arnold's castle.

*Alonzo.* Does the man still live ?

*Dante.* He lives ; but I believe his days will  
soon

Be number'd ; he is daring, and has lately  
Been wounded in a fray, and now his health  
Has yielded to the shock.

*Alonzo (aside).* That is good news.

*(Aloud.)* And that young, pale-faced girl, that  
Annette, Dante,

Is she there still ?

*Dante.* Yes, she is there ; but I have news for  
you.

*Alonzo.* Of whom ; not of my son ?

*Dante.* Of Ezzelin.

*Alonzo (aside).* By God, this priest has proved  
my enemy !

I see his aim ; he is sent here to force me  
To give consent. (*Aloud.*) And so you've seen  
my son !

Does he still love that Annette ?

*Dante.* You oppose it ?

*Alonzo.* Do you ?

*Dante.* I do most certainly, Alonzo.

*Alonzo.* Thank Heaven ! I dreaded you would  
be my foe,

And now you'll prove a friend most powerful.

*Dante.* Ezzelin has been in Saxony, and there  
Has caught the infection of those cursèd doctrines.

*Alonzo.* Curse on the boy ; what shall we do,  
my friend ?

*Dante.* Hark ! here comes some one.

(*Enter EZZELIN. He starts back on seeing*  
DANTE.)

*Alonzo.* Ezzelin, my son,

Whence come you ?

*Ezzelin.* From Count Arnold's castle, father.

*Alonzo.* I thought as much. O you are duti-  
ful

To seek your mistress first ! For six long years

We have been parted, Ezzelin, and you  
Treat me like this?

*Ezzelin.* Father, I may have err'd,  
But love is unrestrain'd by duty's law :  
Yet pardon me.

*Alonzo.* I grant you pardon, freely.  
How have you liked your ramblings, Ezzelin ?  
When first I let you travel I scarce hoped  
To see you back so soon. You seem the same  
As when you left ; the same in every way,  
I fear me.

*Ezzelin.* Yes, unchanged in this at least,  
I love *her* still most dearly.

*Alonzo (scornfully).* Fie ! my son !  
Have you not learnt more wisdom than to love  
A girl like that ?

*Ezzelin.* You do not know her, father,  
Or you would love her too.

*Alonzo.* The girl is fair,  
I have no doubt ; but know you that her father  
Is dying, and I will not let you wed  
Into a falling house.

*Ezzelin.* I am no more  
A boy to be compell'd.

*Alonzo (fiercely).* I say you *shall* not !  
By every saint in heaven, Ezzelin,  
You shall not wed that maiden !

*Ezzelin.* Shall not, father ?

*Alonzo.* Ay, shall not, by my soul ! I think you  
know me ;  
My will has reign'd uncheck'd for many years ;  
I've trodden down each hydra of rebellion  
That dared to rise : think you I will be thwarted  
By my own son ?

*Ezzelin.* And do you think that I,  
Who face to face have stood with ghastly death  
In war's stern game, and rush'd with dripping blade  
Upon the Spanish spears ;—who have inherited  
Your stern, determined will, can yield so lightly ?  
I'll wed her, spite of you.

*Alonzo.* Beware, my son :  
You are beside yourself with love, young fool !  
Or else you had not dared to brave me thus.  
Get you to bed ; to-morrow I will hear you,  
When you are wise again. [*Laughs bitterly.*

*Ezzelin.* And do you mock me ?  
From henceforth the parental ties are snap ;  
I own you not.

*Alonzo.* Look you, young man ; one word,  
And you shall hear my dungeon's iron door  
Grate loud behind you.

*Ezzelin.* Threatening will not daunt me,  
Although I know full well your iron nature,  
How, in your frantic wrath, you drove poor Lucia  
Out of these walls to seek the convent cell,  
Where she, who once was bred in luxury,  
Must pass her days in fasting and rude toil,  
And e'en submit to scourging, at the word  
Of cruel priests.

*Alonzo (to DANTE).* Do you hear this, my friend,  
What the young scoffer says ?

*Dante.* Hearken to me :  
Lucia is well and happy ; in her cell  
She prays for both of you. Young Ezzelin,  
If you have ever loved her, do not scorn  
Her blessèd lot ; and as for you, Alonzo,  
Your harshness has brought forth a happy fruit ;  
I never yet have seen a holier maiden  
Than your fair daughter. (*To EZZELIN.*) Youth,  
thou art too hot ;  
Love which can brook no crossing is not love.

*Ezzelin (drawing).* I'll stay no longer ;

Your soldiers dare not seize me, Lord Alonzo !

[*Exit* EZZELIN.

*Alonzo.* Ho there, Gonzalo ! bid my guards disarm  
The youth who just has gone. (*To* DANTE.) I will  
confine him

Awhile until this fury has abated ;  
And you, if you be urgent to convert him,  
May visit him as often as you please.

[*Terrific uproar in the Castle.*

What is that tumult ? Ho ! Gonzalo, come !  
What is it now ?

*Enter* GONZALO.

*Gonzalo.* Lord Ezzelin has escaped.

*Alonzo.* Hell's fury ! Has escaped ! Why did you  
let him ?

*Gonzalo.* He sought a secret passage in the  
wall,

And reach'd the rampart ere your orders came ;  
The sentinels let him pass, and so he gain'd  
The street ; but there a soldier bade him stand,  
For we had signall'd, but Lord Ezzelin  
Cut down the sentinel, and quickly mounting,  
Urged his swift horse away, and by this time



Has reach'd the open plain ; six horsemen now  
Are on his track.

*Alonzo.* Ay, that is well ; but hark you !

[*Whispers to GONZALO.*

*Gonzalo.* Yes, my good lord. (*To DANTE.*) The  
sentinel is dying,

And our good chaplain is not there ; can you  
Come with me, holy father ?

*Dante.* Yes, my son.

[*Exeunt DANTE and GONZALO.*

*Alonzo.* Oh Heaven, thou smilest on me ! this is  
well ;

Had he been taken, I *must* have confined him  
Here in the castle dungeon, and the priest  
Would soon have found him unassailable  
In his new doctrines, save by flame or torture.  
Now they will catch him, and convey him hence  
Unto my German castle, where no priest  
Has ever enter'd. To the Father Dante  
I'll say he has escaped, and to Count Arnold—  
Nay, but I'll think on that anon. [*Exit.*

SCENE 4. *A Room in Arnold's Castle.* ARNOLD  
*asleep on a couch, ANNETTE sitting on a low stool*  
*beside him.*

*Annette.*



NINE days have pass'd, and still he does  
not come;

Where is he? what has happen'd? Has  
he gone

To seek a home for me? But no, my heart,  
Ill-boding, says it is not that which stays him.

Oh, if he knew what agonizing fears

Rack me, he would not linger thus away.

Yes, it is well for men, whose life is action

And danger; they can bear to leave us women

A little while; new scenes, new actions rise

And court their minds, till in the giddy whirl

Of ever-fresh excitement, time slips past

On eager feet, and then, the journey o'er,

They seek our sides again. But who can soothe

The desolate and forsaken one who pines

In forced inaction, till each passing thought

Is fraught with terror of some undefined

Yet hideous stroke of fate. Could I but sleep  
Till he returns ! but ah ! it is in vain  
To hope for this ! I am indeed forlorn :  
I see the sun blaze o'er the eastern hills  
With listless eyes, I see the sunbeams fall  
In burning noonday heat, and then the shades  
Pass darkening o'er the fields, then in the west  
The sun dips down ; then comes the yellow moon,  
And night, with torturing dreams ; such is my life.  
I, heedless, mark the hours that quickly pass,  
Yet each new day seems longer than the last.

*Arnold (waking).* Is Annette there ?

*Annette.* Yes, father ; do you want me ?

*Arnold.* What is the hour, my child ?

*Annette.* 'Tis nigh on sunset.

*Arnold.* The sun is setting, and my life sinks down,  
Following his steps. My Annette, I had hope  
To see you and your Ezzelin united ;  
Not so has Heaven will'd it, for I feel  
I shall not see another sun.

*Annette.* Dear father,

Do not speak thus, you are not really worse.

*Arnold.* Deceive me not ; the fever has abated,  
But all my strength is gone. I trust to-night

To make my peace with Heaven. Would that Dante  
Were here !

*Annette (in a forced voice).* Can we not seek him,  
father dear ?

*Arnold.* No, Annette ; 'twould be vain, my dearest  
child.

If you can bear to hear it, I would speak  
About your future life : the only one  
Who lives and bears our name, is one Lorenzo ;  
I do not know him well, but many summers  
Have o'er him pass'd ; to him the lands descend  
Upon my death ; you, Annette, will be left  
An unprotected orphan. In the care  
Of Dante I have placed you—nay, my child,  
Weep not like that ! the years will roll away,  
And we shall meet again. You must not fear  
Your father's friend. Dante is rather stern,  
And knows not maidens' ways ; but he is true,  
And will befriend you, so you but obey  
His ghostly counsels.

*Annette.* Father, but one word !  
Oh, I beseech you, father, do not let him  
Force me to take the veil !

*Arnold.* Do not fear,

My darling child ! The cloister walls shall never  
Enclose your graceful form ; those waving locks,  
So long, so long my pride, shall never fall  
Beneath the shears. Have you forgotten Ezzelin ?

*Annette.* Ezzelin ! Oh no, but if you leave me, father,  
Thus unprotected, I shall be the prey  
Of his stern father's wiles. If Ezzelin  
Would only come, I should be safe ; but now  
You leave me, and he is not by to help.  
What if he never come again—must I  
Trust to a priest ? And Dante does not like me ;  
Nay, I am sure, that once within his power,  
The cloister walls would be my prison. Father,  
Is there no way to save me ?

*Arnold.* None but this—  
By marriage, Annette. I had many friends,  
But I am friendless now ; stern death has reap'd  
The comrades of my youth ; but this I tell you—  
Should Ezzelin never come, your only trust  
Must be in Dante. Wherefore should you fear him ?

*Annette (aside).* I dare not tell him how my heart  
has learn'd  
To doubt the Church's faith. (*Aloud.*) What would  
he do with me ?

*Arnold.* Place you as pensioner in some old  
convent,  
For it's protection that you need, not money ;  
I am not rich, but you will have enough  
To live on without stint or care, my child.  
But I am weary now. Ho ! Tonio, come  
And lead me to my room.

*Enter TONIO.*

My dearest Annette,  
You have been ever good and dutiful,  
A grateful daughter ; may God's blessing rest  
Upon your youthful head ! Good night, my child ;  
We'll meet again when morning comes.

*[Exit with TONIO.]*

*Annette.* O why on me must grief and anguish fall?  
How long shall this poor heart be pierced and wrung  
With blow on blow ? what will the next one be ?  
Oh, I could long for death ! the grave were better  
Than this intolerable agony,  
With none to comfort, none to weep with me,  
No loving breast on which to lay my head,  
And sob out all my sorrow ; no, not one  
To say, " I will protect thee !" Here I stand,

Almost an orphan, and in trembling fear  
That some black tale will soon invade my ears.  
Hark ! hark ! a messenger ! Now does my heart  
Leap up and quiver, as the panting deer  
Who, wounded, seeks some lonely forest glade  
To die, and, as he cools his bleeding sides  
With woodland dews, hears in the distance bay  
The savage bloodhounds, as their muzzles track  
His path. O God ! what is it ? if I stand  
Against the door, their words will reach my ears ;  
I can but try it.

*[Leans against the door. A voice is heard without.]*

*Voice.* Hush ! do not speak so loud—Count  
Arnold's dying.

What of Lord Ezzelin ? . . . Nay, it *cannot be* !  
Oh my poor lady ! Nay, but are you sure  
It was *his* body ?

*Another Voice.* Ah, 'tis but too true !  
I knew him from his childhood ; he is dead ;  
I saw him stretch'd among the dewy brambles,  
While the red life-blood drench'd their slender  
boughs.

*[ANNETTE utters a low groan and falls  
senseless on the floor.]*

SCENE 5. ARNOLD'S *Castle*. ANNETTE *sitting alone.*

*Annette.*



DEAD ! dead ! and in the grave ; and I can  
never

See him again, nor even share his lot.  
Oh ! why were we two made ? or why, if made,  
Allow'd to meet and love ? or if allow'd,  
Why not cut off together ? Can the rose  
Blossom and live when the green stem is snapp'd ?  
Can the heart beat, when from the bleeding trunk  
The head is torn ? No ! in the deadly stroke  
Both die : and why may I not perish too ?  
I cannot live alone ; the cruel blow  
Which tore my murder'd Ezzelin from my side  
Crush'd all of good within me ; would that night  
Were ever o'er me with its shrouding mist.  
Vain, vain desire ; when has mortal grief  
E'er stay'd the fleeting hours ? Could he have come  
But for a moment to my arms again,  
To hear me pledge my never-ending love  
Before the death-god call'd him, I should mourn



With far less grief than now. Oh, cruel Death !  
Hast thou no pity, none ? Can not the hope  
Of larger booty tempt thee to give up  
The prey an instant ; since if he *could* come  
I would not stay behind him,—we would seek  
Thy mouldering cells together. Ah ! I rave.  
My brain is struggling against the weight  
That presses on it. Better, yes, far better,  
When still supine I lay beneath the stroke,  
So stunn'd that thought and memory fled alike.  
Now they return again, and add new torture,  
Stabbing my bleeding senses with the thought  
Of that last scene amongst those crimson'd  
          brambles,  
When struggling with the murderers he fell,  
And in the rushing torrent of his blood  
My heart was borne away. Fain would I seek  
Oblivion, but it comes not ; and the scene  
Dances before my eyes, until at last  
A sickening faintness comes which blunts awhile  
Fancy's cold knife. . . . Hark ! there is some one  
          coming.  
Why must they come to me ? To be alone  
Is all I ask, and yet they will not grant it.

*Enter DANTE and LUCIA.*

*Dante.* My dearest child! my heart has bled for  
you,

For I have heard it all. I know full well  
In the first hour of grief, 'tis hard to hear  
A stranger offer comfort ; but, my child,  
I will not leave the castle ; your dear father  
Ask'd me to care for you, so if you want  
To see me I will come at once. May God  
Turn e'en this bitter trial to your good ;  
For those on whom He lays the heaviest cross  
He loves the best. Could we but feel this more,  
Grief would be welcome. May His benediction  
Fill you with that calm peace He left to all  
Who follow in His footsteps. [*Exit DANTE.*

*Annette.* Is he gone?

*Lucia.* Yes, dearest, he is gone ! Full well he  
knows

That grief must have its way.

*Annette.* The cunning serpent.

*Lucia.* Serpent ! Who do you mean?

*Annette.* The father Dante.

*Lucia.* Annette, for shame ! grief surely has  
overcome

Your better nature.

*Annette.* Ezzelin was your brother  
And my betrothed ; but for that wretched priest,  
He now had been beside me. I am sure  
He set Alonzo's mind against our marriage,  
And I believe hired the bloody wretches  
Who murder'd Ezzelin.

*Lucia.* Annette ! are you mad ?  
Remember whom you speak against ! (*Clasping her  
hands.*) O God,  
Pardon her, for she knows not what she says

*Annette.* Know you not Dante's cruel nature,  
Lucia ?  
Have you not heard how he condemn'd a maiden  
To suffer on the rack, and at the stake  
Yield up her life amidst the ravening flames,—  
One whom he loved,—because she was a heretic ?  
That was enough ; if he had but suspected  
That Ezzelin. . . . O my God ! what am I saying ?  
Forget it, Lucia.

*Lucia* (*crossing herself with a shudder*). Ezzelin a  
heretic !

*Annette.* Oh, no ! he was not one. Oh, do not listen  
To what I say ! I have been very wicked.

(*Aside.*) If they but find out what he thought, his  
body

Will be dug up and burnt as if unworthy  
Of Christian burial. My Ezzelin !

They shall not treat even your cold remains  
With disrespect. (*Aloud.*) Forgive me, dearest  
Lucia !

My sorrow is too much for me. I meant not  
To speak like that of Dante. You are kind,  
Dear Lucia, thus to come and sit with me,  
For I need comfort sorely. (*Bursts into tears.*)

*Lucia (gently).* So I thought,

My Annette. You have had a bitter cross  
To bear, I know ; but oh ! you need not droop  
In quenchless grief, for he was pure and good,  
And every virtue which adorn'd his nature  
And made you love him, Annette, now shines  
bright

In undimm'd radiance in our Father's presence ;  
For if you loved him when his heart still bore  
The stains of sin, then how much more may you  
Love him in Heaven, for the gates of death  
Cannot keep love from entering, since by love  
Death's portals first were open'd.

*Annette.*

Lucia, tell me,

You are a nun, and yet you speak as though  
You had known love like Ezzelin's for me.  
—Nay ! nay ! I did not mean to wound you thus.  
Those quivering lips and tearful eyes have told  
me

All I would know.

*Lucia (speaking with effort).* Before I took the  
veil

I shared the common cross of women, Annette.  
I loved and was beloved when Ezzelin went,  
And my stern father bade me seek a home  
Apart from him. We could not wed. I felt  
I could not have return'd my lover's vows  
By such a treacherous scheme as let him wed  
With a deserted and undower'd maiden,  
For he was poor and so—and so we parted,  
Never to meet again on earth. I know not  
Whether he lives or not ; yet every day  
Brings us both nearer to a blessèd union  
Among the saints. Dear Annette, would you like  
To take the veil ?

*Annette (excitedly).* No, no ! I will not do it !  
Are you sent here to lure me to the cloister ?

*Lucia.* But wherefore not, dear friend? What  
happier refuge  
Can you discover than the peaceful cell?  
Forgive me if I say it,—you are friendless.  
I know you loved my brother, and you cannot  
Wed with another. How can you do better  
Than seek a holy life like ours (*rises and clasps*  
*her hands together*)—a life  
Of constant prayer and deeds of charity,  
Oft cheer'd by glimpses of the future glory  
Which crowns a faithful virgin; and at last  
Received above, to live for ever blest,  
Following the Lamb where'er His footsteps lead.  
Think well on this; I would not urge you now.  
May He who smiled on blessèd Magdalene,  
In His dear love persuade you also, dear,  
To choose the better part!

*Annette (impatiently).* Hark! some one comes!

*Lucia.* Then I'll withdraw. O think on what  
I've said!

If you decide to join us, there will be  
One there at least ready and glad to give you  
A sister's welcome to your peaceful home.

[*Exit LUCIA.*

*Annette.* Another wile to lure me to the cloister !  
Dante has sent her here. I'd rather wed  
The worst of men than take the convent veil.  
Ezzelin would sooner see me thus.

*Enter* TONIO.

*Tonio.* My lady,  
The Signor da Fiori has arrived  
And asks for you. Shall I call Father Dante ?

*Annette (hurriedly).* No ! I'll receive him ; bid  
him come this way.  
I must be married, Ezzelin ; for thy sake,  
[*Exit* TONIO.]

My murder'd love, I'll do it. Shall I enter  
One of those houses which support the faith  
Which thou didst hate ?

*Enter* TONIO and LORENZO DA FIORI.

*Tonio.* Signor Fiori, lady.

*Annette.* I bid you welcome, signor, to your  
castle.

Forgive me for my want of courtesy,  
But you have heard how bitterly I've suffer'd  
Of late, in losing my dear father.

*Lorenzo.* Lady !

Do not speak thus, I pray you. I once knew

Your worthy father ; you, I trust, will honour me  
By making this your home a little while. [*Aside.*  
The girl is pretty, and might soon be taught  
To be a careful wife.

*Annette.* I thank you, signor ;  
Will you retire unto the banquet-hall ?  
I cannot favour you to-night.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

*End of Second Act.*







### ACT III.

SCENE I. LORENZO'S *Castle* (*formerly* ARNOLD'S).

*A room.*

*Enter* UBERTO.

*Uberto.*

**M**AY Heaven's plague light upon them both !

This life

Is past enduring : O for the golden days  
When poor Count Arnold lived !—this castle then  
Was fit for man's abode ; now Lady Annette  
Sulks all the day, and as for that Lorenzo,  
If a poor man but tastes a cup of wine,  
He scowls as if he'd done some fearful deed.  
What with her temper and his stinginess,  
I know not how to live. I thought her love  
For Ezzelin was but stuff. Why did she wed  
That hoary miser ?—not but what I smiled  
When she pursued him, and the aged gallant

Leer'd softly from the corners of his eyes,  
And spoke in courtly phrases, conn'd from books  
In the old library. But now all's past,  
They have been wed a twelvemonth, by my soul ;  
And I—why, all my clothes hang loose and free  
Upon my shrivell'd frame. The only pleasures  
Lorenzo lets me have are idleness  
And slumber ; these, he says, will cost him nothing.  
Ha ! here's a flask of wine. I'll drink it up :  
No one is looking. What a happy chance !  
Who can have left it there ? [*Drinks.*

*Enter LORENZO, in an old robe.*

*Lorenzo.* No one is looking ?  
Indeed, sir monk, I saw you all the time.  
What have you got ? Good Heavens ! the flask of  
wine  
I left for strangers ! Hark you, sirrah priest,  
You only live on sufferance here ; beware  
What you are doing.

*Uberto.* Signor, a man must live.  
A priest indeed is vow'd to self-denial,  
But even we at times are overcome  
By thirst and hunger.

*Lorenzo* (*scornfully*). Thirst and hunger, priest !  
Have you not breakfasted ?

*Uberto.* Five hours ago.

*Lorenzo.* Can you not wait till dinner, then ? must  
you

Be ever drinking ? Why, methinks a man  
Like you is ruinous. Where is my wife ?  
Priests always know where women are.

*Uberto.* I saw

The Lady Annette pass some time ago.

*Lorenzo.* Where was she going, priest—tell me at  
once ?

*Uberto.* I know not.

*Lorenzo.* What ! you know not ? You shall know.

*Uberto.* But here she comes, ask her yourself.

*Enter ANNETTE.*

*Lorenzo.* Here, Annette,

Where have you been ?

*Annette.* Why do you wish to know ?

*Lorenzo.* Have you forgotten I'm your husband,  
girl !

No one shall leave this house without *my* know  
ledge ;

I do believe I'm always watch'd by spies.

You have been in the cellars.

*Annette.*

No, indeed,

I have not been there.

*Lorenzo.*

But I say you have :

If ever you go there again, I'll turn

Your chamber to a prison. You shall stay there

Until your cheek grows pale. Tell me, proud girl,

Am I the master here or you?

*Annette.*

Lorenzo,

I never have been there. You, if you like,

May wander in the gloomy rooms below :

I'd rather not.—But why are you suspicious?

*Lorenzo.* What's that to you? I choose to be  
suspicious ;

It is my nature. If you wanted love

You should have married some young cavalier,

[ANNETTE *turns away.*

And not a man whose beard is fleck'd with grey.

I never took you for a wife, my lady ;

All that I wanted was a careful mistress

To keep my house and make my servants work.

*Annette (bitterly).* Oh, Ezzelin ! would I were  
dead beside thee !

*Lorenzo.* Ha ! what is that ? Who may this  
Ezzelin be ?

I've heard you murmur Ezzelin in your dreams ;  
Now who is he ? Oh, oh !—and do you weep ?  
Doubtless he loved you once. And now methinks  
I've heard of him : a passionate young braggart,  
Who was waylaid and murder'd in his flight  
From his old father's house.

*Uberto.* Signor, for shame !  
Have you not heard how tenderly she loved  
Poor Ezzelin ?

*Lorenzo.* Speak when you're wanted, priest.  
Ha ! who comes now ? Some plaguy stranger, surely,  
Who has been here in Arnold's time, and deems,  
Because *he* wasted all his means on strangers,  
That I shall do the same.

*Enter ANDREAS.*

Who are you, fellow ?

*Andreas.* Signor, I come from Father Dante.

*Lorenzo.* Well,  
What's that to me ?

*Andreas.* He purposes to come here,  
And stay some days perhaps, your guest.

*Lorenzo.*

Indeed !

I never ask'd him here ; another trick  
Of yours, you selfish girl. Have you no thought  
Save for yourself, that you must thus invite  
Strangers to eat your husband's bread, and tax  
His slender means ?

*Annette.*

Indeed, I never ask'd him.

*Uberto (in a low voice to LORENZO).* Take heed  
to what you say, the father Dante  
Is one whose name is known throughout the land  
As one of power unlimited—in fact,  
He's an Inquisitor. You must not speak  
About him thus.

*Lorenzo.*

And so he wants to come  
And stay here, does he ?

*Andreas.*

So he purposes.

*Lorenzo.* Tell him I shall be glad to see him, fellow.

*Andreas.* I will, good signor. He will come to-morrow.

Farewell.

*Lorenzo.* May curses light upon those priests !

*Uberto (aside).* Beware ! your life is in my hands,  
Lorenzo.

[*Exit* UBERTO.]

*Annette.* Lorenzo, you had best be careful now.

*Lorenzo.* And wherefore, madam, I should like  
to know?

So you must lecture me?

*Annette.* 'Tis for your good.

Take heed to what you say in Dante's presence.

*Lorenzo.* Ha ! ha ! I am not Ezzelin, to be school'd  
By you. Ha ! ha ! where's that old rogue Uberto ?  
What, what, you will not answer ? O I see  
You're weeping, are you ? Well, begone upstairs,  
And weep your fill up there.—But nay, you shall not.  
Stop where you are. [Exit LORENZO.

*Annette.* And I must ever live  
Beside this heartless wretch ! O Ezzelin,  
I did it for thy sake, and see my fate !  
How the old miser taunts me with thy name.  
My only peaceful time is when I sleep  
And dream of thee, but O ! the dreadful waking !  
To know him by me like some fiendish shape  
Bred from the spells of nightmare, O ! it is horrible.  
Chain'd to a man like that, yet with the memory  
Of those bright, happy days ! When will it end ?  
When will death come ? One may die any day,  
And one may live. O come in mercy, death !

Thou art the only friend can serve me now.  
Not many young as I seek after thee,  
And yet thy scythe is daily, hourly, reaping  
The flowers of youth ; then do not pass me by,  
Break, break the wither'd stalk that sadly bends  
Over the scatter'd leaves of faded joys.  
Yes, it is strange how bitterly I hated  
That Dante : now the thought of seeing him,  
Of seeing any one whose name is link'd  
To those glad days, is pleasing, and I long  
To see once more the haughty priest who crush'd  
My youthful life, confronted with Lorenzo.  
How will the wretch who calls me wife, endure  
The searching glance of Dante's eagle eye ?  
Yet Heaven is my witness that I tried  
Even to love Lorenzo. Now 'tis past,  
And all my hope is centred in one thing,—  
An early death, a quiet, lonely grave.



SCENE 2. *A room in a castle in the Tyrol.*

*Ezzelin (alone).*



WELVE months have pass'd, autumn re-  
turns again,  
And still I linger here a prisoner,  
And watch each day the sun sink slowly down  
Behind the fir woods on yon western ridge.  
Yes, *he* can travel, *he* can light the place  
Where Annette is ; but I, when shall I see her ?  
Must I die here within these dreary walls,  
With all my breast still fired by keenest passion,  
Like some proud eagle girt by cruel bars ?  
Oh ! madden'd haste ! Oh ! fatal, fatal journey !  
Oh ! reckless threat ! Why did I ever go ?  
Did I not know my father's iron will ?  
What fury then misled me ? Had I but sought  
My northern home at once ! The goading thought  
Is fraught with woe untold, and careless fancy  
Mocks me with visions of the glorious prize  
Snatch'd from me. Oh ! she seems to stand before  
me,

And wave the treasures of her golden hair  
Before my eyes, while in the azure depths  
Of her bright orbs a look of sad reproach  
Dwells, and the accents of that silver voice  
Speak to me, “Ezzelin, Ezzelin, where art thou?  
Ah, love! we had been happy for awhile.  
I cannot come. What if she deems me faithless?  
Oh! could I but escape! ’Tis vain, ’tis vain!  
Despair before me points alone to death,  
And the deep calm around this dreary castle  
Is maddening! Oh! how hard to see the grass  
Below my grated window. Were I there  
They should not bring me here alive again.  
Curse on the crafty ruffians, and my curse  
Light heavily upon my father’s head.  
Foul-mouth’d Ambition, blackest spawn of hell,  
How hast thou wasted many a happy love!  
When all the ills, which from Pandora’s box  
Leap’d forth, shall meet around the throne of  
Satan,  
Each with the record of his ghastly harvest,  
Few will compete with *thee*. Yet not alone  
For Annette’s sake I curse thee, stern Alonzo:  
My heart was full of schemes to aid the cause

Of liberty ;—with sword and tongue to work  
With Hutten and Sickingen in the war  
With the usurping Church. Now I am here,  
Like a bright sword rusted and laid aside,  
My hopes of glory sped . . . .

*(An owl screams.)*

Ha! 'tis the owl,  
Which hoots the rising moon with gibing scream,  
Angry that e'en her silver eye should watch  
His ravening flight across the weedy lake.  
Behind the wood the moon shines through the  
mists

Which late, like white and ghostly spectres, hover'd  
O'er the still gleam-lit water, now the fogs  
Are turn'd to blood-red hues beneath the moon.

*(The owl screams again.)*

Where is the night-bird? Ah! I see him now  
Gliding athwart the mists, a dull grey speck ;  
Now plainer he appears ; his long grey wings  
Beat the cold air with noiseless touch ; at last  
The lake is cross'd: he hovers o'er the grass,  
Intent on prey. The timid hares creep forth,  
And from the distant wood the red fox yelps ;

And now the moon has risen, and her face  
 Turns into silver, as she breaks the mists,  
 And a wide flood of light illumines the water,  
 Save where the clear-cut shadows of the hills  
 Rest on its surface. Ah, sweet eventide !  
 Not even harsh captivity can rob me  
 Of all thy charms. (*Starts.*) What is that deep-  
                   toned sound  
 Which floats towards me on the wailing breeze ?  
 A death-bell tolls ; how strangely sound the notes !  
 'Tis but some convent bell, which tolls afar  
 The requiem of a nun ; hence Superstition,  
 Vex me not with thy terrors ; in the world  
 Are mysteries enough without the aid  
 Of thine unearthly fancies. [*Lies down.*]

SCENE 3. LORENZO'S *Castle.* (*A room.*)

*Annette.*



AND so he comes to-day ! A year has flown  
 Since last we met ; perchance I wrong'd  
                   him then.

Stern, and devoted to the Church of Rome,

He is, I know ; but still he could not stoop  
To murder. Yet who could have done the deed ?  
I know not ; let it rest among the crimes  
Which, hidden from mankind, yet cry for ven-  
geance

Before the throne of God. 'Tis very strange,  
But o'er my heart a boding shadow creeps,  
As if this life of weary, dull despair  
Were drawing to an end, and some great change  
Coming towards me. As I look'd last night  
Out of my casement towards the pine-girt rock  
They call the Raven's Crag, methought I heard  
The sable bird croak loud, and, as he ceased,  
From the white waves afar the sea-gull cried.  
Then all was still awhile, and then, methought,  
Across the darkening plain, distinct and clear,  
A death-bell sounded. Some one's doom is near :  
Can it be mine ? No, that were far too good  
For me, ill-fortune's victim . . . Do not strive  
To pierce the mystery. Ha ! who comes here ?

*Enter* TONIO, *showing in* DANTE.

*Annette.* Welcome, my father ! You have long  
delay'd

Your visit to me.

*Dante.* Yes, my daughter ; those  
Who guard the fold have little time for pleasure.  
I deeply grieve that I was call'd away  
Before your marriage day. Where is your husband?  
I fain would see him.

*Annette.* I will go and fetch him.

[*Exit* ANNETTE.]

*Dante.* I like not this, she seems cast down and  
bow'd,  
As if in sorrow unassuaged she mourn'd  
O'er Ezzelin's tomb. Why did she wed Lorenzo?  
Men say he is a miser, and 'tis strange  
That she should marry where love cannot be.  
The girl is not inconstant, and she loved  
Alonzo's son. Her marriage spoil'd my purpose  
To fold her in the cloister. Ha ! 'twas that !  
She must have learn'd my scheme, and fearing  
this,  
Have ta'en the marriage vows with this old man.  
A daring thing to do ; it was vexatious  
I could not stay here when her father died.  
Our life is ever thus ; the news from Rome  
Was urgent, and I could not linger here.

*Enter* UBERTO.

*Uberto.* Welcome, dear brother; times, alas! have  
changed

Since last I met you here.

*Dante.* Methinks they have.

You do not look as well as you did then.

*Uberto.* Fasting is very well indeed *at times* :

But here my life is one continued fast.

And not the flesh alone is sorely weaken'd,

But the poor spirit also shares its fate.

*Dante.* Then it is true what I have lately heard  
About Lorenzo?

*Uberto.* Do not speak of him ;

It makes me shiver.

*Dante.* Then you do not like him?

*Uberto.* Like him ! why, no one ever liked him yet,  
Not e'en his wife.

*Dante.* I thought as much, my brother.

*Uberto.* Their wedded life is one perpetual feud.  
He never speaks to her except to scold her :  
In fact he never speaks to anybody  
In other way than this.

*Dante.* How does she bear it?

*Uberto.* Poor girl, she seems as if she did not care

For anything—her heart is almost broken.

*Dante.* What did she wed him for?

*Uberto.* Heaven only knows !

The man's a lean, old, discontented miser,  
And half a heretic.

*Dante (sternly).* This must be look'd to.

*Uberto (aside).* Plague on my tongue, and his  
ill-temper'd zeal.

(*Aloud.*) I only meant to say he does not care  
About religion ; you must not imagine  
That he believes in Luther's cursèd doctrine.

*Dante.* You should exhort him, brother. Pardon  
me,

We must not sleep in dangerous times like these.

*Uberto.* He would not listen to me.

*Dante.* Warn him, then :

Say that the Inquisition is not rich,  
And that a law has given them power to seize  
The wealth of those who are believed to favour  
The Lutheran doctrines.

*Uberto.* Cease ! Lorenzo comes.

*Enter LORENZO and ANNETTE.*

*Annette.* This is the father Dante.



*Lorenzo.*

Oh, indeed !

Do you suppose I cannot use my eyes ?

There are but two here, and I know Uberto,

So that the other must be Dante. Yes,

I've heard of him.

*Dante.*

Nothing but good, I trust.

*Lorenzo.* O surely. What's the latest news from  
Rome ?*Dante.* A general alarm pervades the city  
Touching the new-born heresies of Luther.  
Men deem the pontiff casts uneasy looks  
Towards the north ; the cardinals and bishops  
Say that the weapons of the Holy Office  
Are blunted and inactive, gold is wanted  
To edge St. Peter's sword, the laity  
Must give their treasure to the new Crusade.  
And more than this, the Church is now enforced  
To confiscate the goods of such as favour  
The new belief, therefore it doth behove  
All men to seek her favour by their zeal  
For the true faith ; as for the loose and careless  
She hath her arm laid bare.*Lorenzo.*

Ay, burn them all.

*Dante.* I'm glad to see you zealous for the faith.

'Tis well, but do not let your zeal outrun  
The bounds of Christian charity ; the Church  
Takes not the sword until all other means  
Have fail'd, e'en as the gardener pray'd his lord  
To spare the barren vine.

*Lorenzo.* Holy man,  
Your words are eloquent, I pray you honour  
My castle for a little while, in truth  
I'll do my best to make your entertainment  
Such as becomes a father of the Church.  
But I am poor, my lady young and careless,  
Still, since I know that priests are vow'd to  
fasting,  
You will forgive me if your fare be scant.

[*To ANNETTE, who looks impatient.*

Now do not speak, you always spoil my plans.

*Dante.* Thanks, signor, do not vex yourself for me.

*Annette.* My father, have you heard of Lucia  
lately?

*Dante.* Alonzo's daughter? Yes. Her Christian life  
Has won her high preferment in the convent,  
And when the Abbess died, the nuns elected  
Lucia to fill her place ; though young in years,  
Her conduct is esteem'd by all the sisters

As fitted for the post.

*Lorenzo* (to ANNETTE). And who is Lucia?

*Annette*. A friend of mine.

*Lorenzo*. That answer will not do,  
I must know more.

*Dante*. You cannot well know more.—  
But hark ! who comes this way ? I hear the tramp  
Of some fast horse, as if a messenger  
Charged with important news came towards the  
castle.

*Lorenzo*. By Heaven, I trust 'tis not another  
stranger ;  
These visitors will ruin me, I know.

*Enter ANTONIO.*

*Antonio* (to DANTE). O, holy father, I have fearful  
news  
To tell you—Lord Alonzo has been murder'd !

*Annette* (staggers against the wall). Murder'd !

O God of Justice, 'tis Thy work !

*Dante*. Murder'd ! it cannot be !

*Antonio*. He is not dead,  
But life is ebbing fast, and he has sent  
For you in haste.

*Dante.* Who did the fatal deed?

*Antonio.* We know not, the assassin leap'd the window,

And has escaped.

*Dante (to LORENZO).* Forgive me, worthy signor,  
But I must go, I trust I come in time.

Look to the Lady Annette, she has fainted.

[*Exeunt DANTE and ANTONIO ; UBERTO and attendants carry ANNETTE out.*]

*Lorenzo.* By all the Saints I am well quit of him :  
She only sent for him to lecture me.

SCENE 4. ALONZO'S *Castle.* *A room.* ALONZO  
*stretched on a couch.*

*Alonzo.*



AND are they gone at last, the noisy crew  
Who feign'd to weep around my dying bed?  
All gone? O Saints! to be struck down  
like this

Beneath a murderer's knife, when all my plans  
Were crown'd with victory! Am I really dying?  
So said the leech. I was not made for death.  
Cannot the spirit by its iron strength

Support the failing body. All things as yet  
Have yielded to me, now must death be conqueror?  
Nay, if I cannot win the strife, at least  
I will not tremble. I will die,—I will,—  
E'en as I lived. Avaunt! ye boding thoughts.  
Shall I be made the sport of mocking fiends,  
Who ruled the passions of ten thousand hearts,  
And crush'd beneath my heel like writhing worms,  
Fell spirits from whose schemes Satan himself  
Had learnt a bitter lesson; and shall death  
Subdue me? Put forth all thy thousand terrors,  
And since I cannot choose but yield, I'll sink,  
Yet not dismember'd, like a bark whom waves  
'Whelm in mid ocean. Ay, these darkening eyes,  
This sudden ceasing of the raging pain,  
Tell me too truly that death hovers o'er me.  
Come, then! [Faints away.]

*Enter DANTE and SERVANT.*

*Dante.* Leave us alone, my son.—Yes, there he lies,  
Swathed round in blood-stain'd bandages, who late  
Possess'd such power as men can rarely gain.  
Such is the fate of despots. Is he dead?  
Upon his brow the fearful sweat of death

Stands out in chilly drops. Can I not rouse him?  
Alonzo !

*Alonzo (faintly).* Who is there? I know thy face,  
But cannot now recall it.

*Dante.* I am Dante.

*Alonzo (feebly).* Dante?

*Dante.* Dante Colonna.

*Alonzo.* Ay, the youth

Who sought my sister. I remember thee.

What wouldst thou? She is wed.

*Dante.* Alas! my son,  
All that is o'er. Hast thou no thought to make  
Confession of thy sins?

*Alonzo.* Confession, father?

I cannot do it! Brain and sense are reeling,  
I *cannot* call them up!

*Dante.* And knowest thou not  
The sinner's doom,—the lake of fire,—the worm  
Which cannot die; and wilt thou dare to trifle  
While the red flames are heated for thy soul?

*Alonzo.* I cannot tell them now; had you but come  
An hour ago—

*Dante.* Say only, "I have sinn'd,"  
And He who died for thee shall snatch thy spirit

Back from the fiend.

*Alonzo.* Yes ; more than that I cannot !

Father, if you will have it, I have sinn'd.—

But life goes fast : young Ezzelin, lives he yet ?

Will he still thwart me ? In my German castle

A year has pass'd over his head—they shall not,—

I say, they shall not wed ! [Dies.

*Dante.*

May God absolve thee !

Amidst the penal fires be thy soul

Purified quickly, and thy bloody death

Warn all who leave the narrow way of virtue

To scale the dizzy heights of wild ambition.

Alas ! poor wretched man, struck down by God

When all thy schemes were crown'd with victory.

'Tis ever thus : the bolt is long delay'd,

While we wax haughty, and at last forget

That *He* reigns over all. O could we see

Behind the clouds of heaven, the angry Judge

Grasping the lightning as the years roll on,

And the dread doom comes nearer. Ah ! may Christ

In His sweet love accept that last confession.

[Turns to the body.

How calm the smile which dawns upon that face

Hush'd in death's perfect slumber ! As I gaze

Upon those features, sad remembrance comes  
Of thee, my lost and loved one ! Yes, he wears  
A smile like thine. I seem to see thee sleeping  
Upon the dungeon floor, as once I saw thee  
After the torture, when the rack's sharp anguish  
Was lull'd by sleep's oblivious charm, and dreams  
Dispell'd awhile the knowledge of the doom  
Awaiting thee ;—ay, such fond hopes were mine  
In manhood's early years. [*Takes out the crucifix.*

But Thou hast placed  
Thy tortured form across the evil way.  
Despised, rejected, dying for my sake,  
No earthly love was Thine ! Upon that Tree  
Let me hang with Thee, till a Saviour's pangs  
Pierce this weak heart, and such a love as thine  
Burn through me ; yes, the sacred love of God,  
Which dares to judge, yet ever wills to save.—  
Now to my work. The dead man spoke of Ezzelin  
Before he died—the youth we thought was dead !  
Poor Annette, thou wert sore deceived ! Where, then,  
May Ezzelin be ? Alonzo spoke, I think,  
Of some old castle. I must speak with those  
Who have the secret, then I'll send Sebastian  
To bring the youth to me ; here I'll remain



Until the burial, and perhaps 'twere well  
 To summon to my aid a score of soldiers  
 To help the castle guards, and hold in check  
 The rabble here.—Ho ! Andreas !

*Enter ANDREAS.*


Send out  
 To seek Sebastian. Heaven grant that Ezzelin  
 May not prove froward !

*[Exeunt DANTE and ANDREAS.]*

SCENE 5. *The Castle in the Tyrol.*

*EZZELIN alone, pacing up and down.*

*Ezzelin.*

Y Heaven, this is too much ! I cannot  
 bear it

Much longer—nay, I will not ; either life  
 In perfect liberty, or else the grave !  
 What is my life indeed ?—a sort of death,  
 A slow decay of mind and body also,  
 A weight which presses on the fever'd brain  
 With stern, relentless pressure, or a flame  
 Of burning wrath which sears it ? I, shall I  
 Fear death ? What more of misery can death

Afford?—nay, then my anguish will be less  
 Than lingering here, like Ixion, ever burnt  
 By my fierce love. What boots my youthful strength,  
 The glorious dreams of usefulness to others  
 Which fill'd my heart, how she and I would live  
 To serve mankind? What boots the thirst for know-  
 ledge

At length unclosed to man, and worse, O! worse,  
 The passionate love by which I vowed to her  
 My strength, my zeal, my talents, ay, my life.  
 I laid them at her feet; all that God gave me  
 I would have given her. Heaven, hast thou *no* pity?  
 Say, can I serve thee here? were I but free  
 Beside her, I would work alike for thee  
 And for mankind. God! let thy deadly lightning,  
 The pale blue sword of Heaven, descend and strike  
 This cursèd tower, though amongst its ruins  
 My blacken'd form would lie. O! damned bars!  
 Can I not break you? [*Shakes the bars furiously.*]

Nay, you shall give way.

Fiends give me strength, if God will not: break!  
 break!

One last attempt for Annette.

[*Wrenches the bars frantically; they give way.*]

It is done !

Now how shall I escape ?—my brain grows dizzy  
Ill used to such success. I will command it  
And summon up my powers ; 'tis for her !  
Where is the sentinel ? Next time he passes  
I will attempt the leap : the grass seems nearer  
Than ever. See ! a horseman riding up  
With news. Good Heavens ! the sentinel has  
vanish'd.

The messenger alights, his charger feeds  
Unwatch'd ; now, now, for freedom and for Annette !

*[Leaps the window.*

*End of Third Act.*





ACT IV.

SCENE I. LORENZO'S *Castle. A room.*

*Enter LORENZO, ANNETTE, and TONIO.*

*Lorenzo.*

**D**OES the moon shine to-night ?

*Tonio.*

Ay, surely, signor ;

She's nearly at the full.

*Lorenzo.*

I have a journey

To take to-night, on business of importance.

*Annette.* Will you be long away ?

*Lorenzo.*

Now there's a question !

I am not journeying on your affairs,

But on my own. I shall return to-morrow.

*Annette.* It's growing dark . . . .

*Lorenzo (interrupting).* And you'll be happy now,  
Without me for awhile ; but do not count

Too much on that. I shall be back to-morrow ;  
Mind what you do while I'm away.

[*Exeunt* LORENZO and TONIO.]

*Annette.*

Ay, go !

I feel as if the clouds were suddenly lifted,  
And a pale sun-gleam came, when thou art gone.  
Yes, sometimes vain repinings fill my mind,  
As if the cloister cell *had* been a refuge—  
The peaceful life had sooth'd my anguish'd heart.  
There are some steps we never can retrace,  
And such was mine ; yet was it not for love  
I bent my neck beneath the yoke of marriage ?  
And death alone can break the bridal vow.  
When some fair being, on whom all things smile,  
Is struck by Death's cold dart, all prayers are vain  
To move him ; no delay, however pray'd for,  
Is given. But to me, thou wilt not come !  
When the stern death-bell toll'd that fatal night,  
I hoped it was for me. 'Tis vain, 'tis vain.

*Ezzelin (speaking behind the arras).* Annette !

*Annette (starting to her feet).* Oh ! 'tis his voice !

Say, are you come

To fetch me ? I am ready : with you, love,  
I do not fear to go.

*Enter EZZELIN, from behind the arras.*

*Ezzelin.* Fear not, my own.

*Annette (interrupting).* Oh, no! I do not fear.

Fain would I fall

Upon thy breast, but that I fear to clasp

Thin air. Is thy grave far from hence?

*[Recoiling with a shudder.*

*Ezzelin.*

My Annette,

I am not dead; it was a wicked lie

They told thee, love.

*Annette.*

O cease, wild heart, to beat!

My brain is reeling, ah! 'tis but some fiend

Who takes thy shape; it is not really thou—

Not e'en thy spirit, that were far too blissful

For one like me.

*Ezzelin (approaching her).* Come dearest, it is I,

Weary and soil'd with travel, but myself

As real as when we parted.

*Annette.*

Speak again!

Thy voice is like the sunshine-gleam which breaks

O'er some dismasted ship, which floats at will

'Midst seething waves, and shows the long'd-for

haven

To mariner's weary eyes. And art thou really  
Ezzelin?

*Ezzelin (taking her in his arms).* And will not  
this persuade thee?

*Annette (recoiling).* Ah, 'tis he

Again! Oh, Ezzelin, Ezzelin! would to God

We ne'er had seen each other!—go; oh, go!

*Ezzelin.* And is it for a word like this I braved  
All danger, seeking thee, my guiding star  
Ever when night was darkest? Could not thy love  
Endure a season? Art *thou* faithless, Annette?  
Then life indeed has lost all gleams of sunshine.

*Annette (falling on her knees and seizing EZZELIN  
by the arm).* Nay, hear me, Ezzelin! By  
every tie

Between us,—by those golden days of youth,  
Ere sorrow came; by every cruel pang  
That pierced my bleeding heart when first I heard  
That thou wert dead, unbend that angry frown,  
Or thou wilt kill me. Do not turn away.  
I love, O yes! I love thee more than ever.  
But no, I cannot be thy wife—not now—  
I am . . . . .

*Ezzelin.* Another's? no! thou dost not say so, girl!

O traitress ! To have ponder'd, grieved, and fought,  
And does it end in this? [*Draws.*

Where is thy husband ?

This steel shall pierce his heart, and then my own,  
Fair fiend.

*Annette.* It is not like thee, Ezzelin !

Wilt thou condemn me ere my tale is told ?

*Ezzelin.* I will not wrong thee ; speak, I wait to  
hear.

*Annette.* Canst *thou* believe that *I* have done  
thee wrong ?

O Ezzelin, Ezzelin ! was it not for thee  
I sold myself to bondage, and endured  
Treatment unworthy of a slave from him  
Who called me wife, that every night I water'd  
My bridal bed with tears—to save thy bones,  
That they might rest in consecrated ground  
Safe from abuse ? O listen to me now !  
I tell thee that I heard that thou wert murder'd  
The night my father died ; a mangled body  
Was shown me like to thine. What could I think ?  
I hoped in vain, and strove against despair,  
But the long weeks roll'd onward, and thou camest  
not.



What could I do, but let the fatal tale  
Enter my heart? Yes, I was left alone,  
A friendless orphan, widow'd ere a bride,  
With none to comfort; and stern Dante came  
To claim me for the cloister. Then I thought  
That thy sad spirit had return'd to earth,  
If that had been my fate, so I choked down  
The burning tears, and turn'd my griefs to smiles,  
For marriage was my only refuge. Ezzelin,  
Thou knowest the zeal of Dante; wouldst thou  
rather

Have found me veil'd and vow'd to superstition  
Than as I am? O for thy sake I did it,  
And thou requitest me thus!

*Ezzelin.*

Forgive me, love;

Thou *hast* been faithful! Annette, listen now.  
Are we not married by the vows of hearts  
Long interchanged? Can such weak vows as  
thine,  
Built upon false foundations, cope with ours?  
Has not God join'd us? Thy false marriage vows  
The doctors of the German Court must loose,  
For thou art mine,—thou canst not be another's,—  
Thou dost not love him?

*Annette.* Love him ! O, dear Ezzelin,  
Would you could save me from him !

*Ezzelin* (*pointing to his sword*). Wherefore not ?

*Annette.* You would not murder him !

*Ezzelin.* But he had best  
Beware how we two meet. But look you; Annette,  
I broke away from prison, and lay hid  
Among the hills of Tyrol for a while ;  
Then, when night fell, I mounted and rode fast  
Towards Italy. But yestermorn I reach'd  
My castle, and I heard that Lord Alonzo  
Was dead. I enter'd in and claim'd my lawful  
rights.

They did not speak of you, so when the dusk  
Fell over earth, I journey'd here unnoticed,  
And sought the secret passage to your room.  
Now when I reach'd my castle, I was told  
That Dante's bloodhounds had been sent to seize  
me

In the Tyrolean prison, and that Dante  
Waited for me at Venice—yea, in truth,  
The day before I came had left my castle.  
My vassals will obey me, but I dare not  
Remain there long. Say, wilt thou fly with me

To Germany? Brave Francis Von Sickingen  
Will shelter us, and priestly mercenaries  
Dare not invade his lands. Think not of vows,—  
I am your husband; but the time is short,  
I *must* escape ere long.

*Annette.* You tempt me sorely.

*Ezzelin.* Think well: to-night—this hour, thou  
must decide:

Choose'twixt my faithful love and thy base husband.

*Annette.* Parted so long, I cannot let thee go;  
It would be worse than ever. Ezzelin,  
I must be—yes, I am, thine, thine alone.

[*Throws herself into his arms.*]

*Ezzelin.* How I have long'd for this. The past  
is gone;—

One drop of love like thine will quench the fires  
Of thousand sorrows. Let me keep thee here,  
My own poor wounded dove, come home at last!

[*Gazes down on her face.*]

But thou art changed. What have they done to  
thee?

Thy brow is worn with sorrow.

*Annette.*

Oh! my life

Has been a hideous dream. The wretched man

Whose name I bore has mock'd me with thy name.  
But thou—why comes that cruel smile again?  
Why dost thou handle thus thy rapier, Ezzelin?

*Ezzelin.* Not for you, love. Look you, to-morrow  
night

I'll come for you ; you must be waiting here.  
I cannot come before, but do not fear,  
I will not fail ; my servants will be waiting  
Not far from hence with horses.

*Annette.* But Lorenzo  
Returns to-morrow night, and he will miss me.

*Ezzelin.* Fear not ! Lorenzo shall be cared for,  
Annette.

Stain not thy lips by speaking of him, dear.  
I will engage he shall not miss thee long.  
Now I must go. Thy servants do not come  
here?

*Annette.* Never at night ; and none save I and  
thou  
Know of the passage. Stay ! Lorenzo knows it :  
If he discover?

*Ezzelin.* He will not betray us !  
He may not be with thee, perchance. But see !  
The moon is high, and I must leave thee now,—

But for a day,—at midnight I'll return.

Forget not to be here.

*Annette.*

And can I choose

But count the hours till then?

*Ezzelin.*

When thou art safe

Within my walls, as thou shalt be ere long

(Thou knowest I cannot take thee with me now),

Then love will be our happy lot again :

Farewell till then.

SCENE 2. *A Wood not far from LORENZO'S Castle.*

*Enter EZZELIN and SERVANTS with Horses, &c.*

*Ezzelin.*



TAND both of you where hangs the  
thickest shade.

Let not your torches' gleam show e'en so  
much

As doth the glow-worm's lamp or owlet's eye.

Ye know full well the work I deign for you !

Watch for some signal from yon little casement

Whose tiny light ye see ; when I have done

That which I purpose, ye must do the rest.

*[Comes forward out of hearing of the servants.]*

Now over all things floats night's dusky veil,  
And sable clouds are gathering. It is well,—  
Fit cover for the deed; and here I wait  
Before the castle. Grim and strange the towers  
Stand 'neath the rolling night-clouds; lights are  
passing

Down the long passages: like spectral eyes  
They gleam from every window. What is that  
noise?

The horn they blow when guests arrive. Lorenzo  
Has come already. How like a note of doom  
The sound rings out above the darkening copses,  
Scaring the owls around! . . . In times like these  
The mind must draw its only source of counsel  
From its own depths: I would not ask of *her*.  
The guilt—if it be guilt—shall fall on me.  
Hath he not wrong'd her,—crush'd her youthful  
life,

Already pierced by sorrow for my sake?  
Taunted her when she wept for me? O God!  
My blood boils at the thought! *If it be guilt!*  
Why is it things are different in the glow  
Of noonday heat from what they are when night  
Veils all things? Is it of a truth, as poets

In the far North have told, that day alone  
Belongs to man ; but, when the sun is gone,  
The powers of ill begin their ghostly reign  
Beneath the grim white moon? that woodland trees  
Change into hags and goblins? . . . . When I left  
Annette, the deed I purpose seem'd as light  
As when we tread with careless foot a worm  
That lies across our path. Dim sophistries  
Shrink into naught, and in its fearful nature  
The deed stands out—I dread to speak the word—  
And it is *murder*! Nay, so harsh a word  
May not apply to this. Why may a nation  
Commit a thousand murders, and remain  
Unpunish'd, while a man may not avenge  
Foul injury? All men agree that man  
May not for private cause assault the life  
God gave another ; yet, on slight pretexts  
Of human policy, men march to battle  
Beneath the approving smile of reverend priests,  
Bless'd by their prayers; the while, in stately  
churches,  
Fond wives and mothers kneel before the Cross  
Of Him, from whose pale lips a prayer for pardon  
E'en for His murderers issued in the death pang,

And pray for victory and Heaven's protection  
For those who strike to dust their fellow-men !  
These do no wrong ! But I may not avenge  
Poor Annette's tears, and 'scape the wrath of  
Heaven !

Yet why should I be nice on points like these ?  
Dark is the chaos of conflicting creeds,  
While each fresh-springing sect allows the sword  
To back its quarrel. If such a thing be lawful  
On any grounds, surely my cause is just.  
I only slay Lorenzo to escape  
Pursuit,—to save my Annette from the wrath  
Of Dante. It were worse than criminal  
To leave her with Lorenzo,—I *must* save her :  
Her safety doth demand Lorenzo's death.  
Then why this weakness ? If the deed be sinful—  
(I do not say it is, for no one knows  
Now what is sin or not since Luther taught,  
And none return to tell us of the truth  
Of those deep points where theologians jangle ;  
And Luther says to those who hold the faith  
God can impute no sin, and I believe  
In Luther's doctrines more than those of Rome)—  
Well, *if* the deed be sin, I can repent



In after-life. Yes, let the future rest.  
I will not scruple longer,—'tis his blood  
I crave for : I *will* have it. Annette mine,  
And but Lorenzo's death betwixt us two,  
A happy life beyond : long years of bliss  
Made sweeter by the past, due justice wrought  
Upon my darling's persecutor ;—such the prospect  
Which spreads before me. Here, I swear, it shall be !  
Down, coward doubts ! hush, ceaseless voice of  
conscience !

I will not hear thee ; ay, beside her wrongs  
The voice of God were powerless to restrain me.  
Nor could the snowy robes and golden crowns  
Of which priests tell, if they are forfeited  
By this my work, allure me from the path  
On which I set my feet.

[*The castle clock strikes twelve.*

The fatal hour strikes.

[*Glides forward towards a secret door in the  
wall, and then turns towards the wood.*

Hark ! what a roar

Of gathering winds sweeps by ; the storm long  
waiting

Rages around me. Ay ! my thoughts forbade

My senses to perceive the rushing tempest.  
Roar, winds ! ere morning comes a wretched soul  
Shall toss among you.

*[Draws his sword and enters the door.*

SCENE 3. LORENZO'S *Castle.* *A room.*

*Enter ANNETTE.*

*Annette.*



HE wind blows cold, and raves around the  
castle :

Now in low wailing sounds its voice is  
heard,

Now, with a shriek of mingled rage and fear,  
It rushes on ; the pattering sleet beats fast  
Upon the wall ; the woven tapestry  
Now swells, now shrinks. Hark how the castle gate  
Screams in the wind ! and from the gloomy sea  
A roaring voice is heard ; athwart the night  
I see the white crests leaping ; what a crash  
Of falling trees, and wailing birds, that fly  
Homeless amid the tempest. How the walls  
Rock in the blast, which maddens more and more,  
And screams defiance at the Lord of Storms

Who drives it on ! How sudden the storm has risen !  
The sky was cloudless but an hour ago.  
'Tis nearly midnight ; Ezzelin must be near :  
What if he meet Lorenzo as he comes  
To search each room, and see the bolts drawn  
fast ?

Ah, I forgot ! Oh fatal, fatal error !  
He always comes *here*. Oh, my Ezzelin,  
You will be slain ! O God ! what shall I do  
To save you ? Ah, too late, the hour draws near :  
O time ! run slow ; midnight ! delay thy wings,<sup>1</sup>  
And let the search be done ere Ezzelin comes.  
He must not die. My brain reels round with horror.  
Betray'd by *me* to death ! The clock unheeding  
Is on the stroke. I hear Lorenzo's footsteps.  
What can I do ?

[*The clock strikes, and LORENZO enters.*

*Lorenzo.*           What are you doing there?  
Thinking of Ezzelin ? You do wrong to waste  
A heart so capable of love on one  
Whom worms are gnawing.

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<sup>1</sup> "O lentè lentè currite noctis equi."—MARLOWE'S  
*Faustus*.

*Ezzelin (suddenly lifts the arras and leaps into the room with his sword bare).* Be not too sure of that !

*Lorenzo.* Ha ! who is that ? Ho, there !

*[Runs towards the door. ANNETTE springs to it and locks it, throwing the key among the brands.*

*Lorenzo (turning furiously on her).* Harlot, is this thy work ?

I'll kill thee for it ! *[Draws.*

*Annette.* Ezzelin, save me !

*Ezzelin (rushing on Lorenzo).* Villain !

Unhand her.

*Lorenzo (throwing ANNETTE on the ground).*

Trapp'd like a wild beast ! have at you !

*[They fight, and LORENZO falls.*

*Ezzelin.* Lie there, foul beast, and be thy hoary beard

Dabbled in blood ! You would wed youth and beauty ?

Ha, ha ! you thought you had a helpless girl  
To deal with, did you ? May the devil rack you  
With fiercest pain for this.

*Lorenzo.*

Oh ! I am dying !

Help! help!

*Ezzelin.* 'Tis vain, my vengeance is complete.

*Lorenzo.* Yes, murderer, I die, but you shall never  
Know happiness again; my blood-stain'd ghost  
Shall ever stand beside you. And for thee,

[*To Annette.*

Cursed harlot, in thy death hour I will come  
To drag thee down with me.

*Ezzelin (lifting his rapier).* I will not hear  
More of this graveyard eloquence. Come, Lorenzo.  
My latest act to thee shall be a deed  
Of mercy.

[*Stabs LORENZO furiously again and again.*

*Lorenzo.* Oh! oh! ye devils, fetch me quick! hell  
fire

Were easy to this torture! [*Dies.*

*Ezzelin (wiping his sword).* The deed is done!  
Now let the earth receive the blood-stain'd body.  
And men forget Lorenzo's name.

[*Goes to the window.*

*Annette (who has risen).* Oh, Ezzelin,  
What have you done? Lorenzo, where is he?

*Ezzelin.* Name not his name, my darling; all is  
o'er

'Twixt him and thee. His cruel tongue shall never  
Torment thee in thy sadness. Come to me—  
Mine, mine at last.

*Annette.* O Christ ! that mangled form  
Stretch'd on the floor, from whose deep wounds  
the life-blood  
Runs into ever-widening pools of crimson—  
That—that Lorenzo?

*Ezzelin* (*stepping forward and throwing a cloak  
over the body*). Turn thy eyes away.  
Forget his name : those cruel months of grief  
Shall seem henceforward as some dream of midnight  
To one who walks amid the morning gales.

*Annette.* Love sees no evil in the fiercest act  
Of him who hath the empire o'er her heart ;  
Nor I in thine. But oh ! remove the body :  
That cloak but adds new terrors to my fancy.

*Ezzelin.* Love, they will soon be here to whom I  
gave  
Charge of the burial. (*Listens.*) How the night wind  
screams !  
( 'Tis ever strange to hear the wind at midnight,  
But never have I heard it rave so loud ),  
His spirit calls for vengeance to the blast.

Annette (*shuddering*). Talk not like that. O God !

I hear a footstep

Echoing along the passage.

Ezzelin.

Do not fear.

'Tis but the pattering of the rain outside,

Or else my servants are at hand.

*Enter* SERVANTS.

Ezzelin. Take up this carrion, and bear it hence  
Unto the forest ; in its leafy depths  
Prepare a grave. Henceforth the "lated traveller,"<sup>1</sup>  
Who seeks the castle, shall at midnight hear  
The night-owl scream above Lorenzo's grave.

[*Laughs scornfully.*]

Annette. O let us go ! I dread to linger here.  
Were you obliged to slay him ?

Ezzelin.

But for that

He would have slain thee. All around is silent,  
The castle seems buried in sleep ; they know not  
Their master's fate. It was in this same room  
We parted, was it not ?

Annette.

No, in the vestibule

---

<sup>1</sup> "Now spurs the lated traveller apace."—*Macbeth*.

Before the chapel. Wherefore do we wait?

*Ezzelin.* We wait until my servants gain the wood.

[*Looks out of window.*

The storm has ceased, the clouds are rolling off,  
And the broad yellow moon will soon appear.  
Already on the bay I see a line  
Of gold, which shows where her celestial beam  
Falls in mild radiance, though to our weak eyes  
She's wrapt in storm-black clouds; thus many a deed  
Which seems all black to man, yet casts a glow  
On some unresting heart, and bids her passion  
Rest and be still. See, Annette, how afar  
The edge of yonder sable cloud is bound  
With a broad line of gold, which deepens yet  
Brighter and wider as the darkening vapour  
Shrinks 'neath the moon. And now the moon  
comes forth

In undimm'd glory. Round her, in the gap,  
The stars gleam bright ; full on thy face the moon-  
beam

Streams, and illumines thy brow ; a halo quivers  
Above thy golden hair, which softly waves  
In the cool night wind, and I see thine eyes  
Fix'd on my own. O Annette ! on this night



I trust our troubles end : soon we shall be  
In Germany together, far away  
From all these fearful memories. My sweet bride  
(For that thou art, howbeit the Romish Church  
Scowls at our union), I in vain would strive  
To know the full perfection of my bliss.  
All I can tell is that thy heart is mine,—  
Yes, really mine at last ; and those sad months  
Have made this time still dearer. Come now,  
Annette :

We must not linger here.

*[Turns to lead her out, and suddenly starts back.]*


Why did they leave  
That gory pool to curdle on the floor?  
How blue it looks ! the moonbeam dances in it.  
Come love, away, away,—our horses wait  
To bear us to my castle.

*[Excunt EZZELIN and ANNETTE through the  
secret passage.]*

SCENE 4. LORENZO'S *Castle, the room of  
the murder.*

*Enter DANTE, SEBASTIAN, and TONIO.*

*Sebastian.*

 LORENZO disappear'd, and Annette too,  
So I have heard ; and when the servants  
sought

The room, they found the door was strongly barr'd.  
They forced the door, and—

*Dante.* Well, Sebastian, then  
What happen'd ?

*Sebastian.* Nay, I know not : Tonio saw  
The room, not I.

*Dante.* Speak, Tonio, then ; what saw you ?

*Tonio.* The floor was stain'd with blood ; and on  
the boards

Lay our old Signor's rapier smash'd and broken :  
The arras was torn down, and searching there  
We found a secret passage whose dark boards  
Were stain'd with blood ; upon the chamber floor  
A pool of gore lay curdling, and the door-key

Lay 'midst the wasted brands.

*Dante.*                                There has been murder !  
Saw you no traces of the Lady Annette?

*Tonio.* No, none whatever.

*Dante.* That will do, my son ;  
You may depart. [*Exit* TONIO.]

*Dante* (to SEBASTIAN). The thing is plain enough.  
You should have warn'd Lorenzo when Lord Ezzelin  
Escaped.

*Sebastian.* Escaped? We never even saw him.  
I reach'd the castle and they found him gone.  
He must have leap'd the window, for the bars  
Were wrench'd away,

*Dante.* You might have well been certain  
He would have come here straight, and so he has,—  
Murder'd Lorenzo, and escaped with Annette.  
When you came to me with the news that Ezzelin  
Had broken from the castle, I made sure  
He would be here, therefore I bade you come  
With me from Venice. I have here full powers  
From the Inquisitors to seize them both.  
Doubtless they are now at young Ezzelin's castle :  
We must arrest them there.

*Sebastian.* But, holy father,

Know you not that the vassals there have risen,  
Furious from famine and neglect, and now  
Besiege the castle?

*Dante.* That is well, my son ;  
They cannot flee, but have you men enough  
To put to flight the rabble, and besiege  
The castle?

*Sebastian.* Yes, I have a force sufficient ;  
But here's a messenger.

*Enter MESSENGER.*

*Dante.* Whence come you, son?

*Messenger.* From young Lord Ezzelin's castle,  
now beleaguer'd  
By the infuriate mob.

*Dante.* Is Ezzelin there?

*Messenger.* Yes, he is there ; but no one ever sees  
him.

He keeps himself apart, with no companion  
Save a young girl, who seems of noble birth.

*Dante.* What is she like?

*Messenger.* She has long golden hair,  
And deep blue eyes.

*Dante.* 'Tis Annette, sure enough.

But what's your message, friend? who sent you here?

*Messenger.* I came to say the convent of St.

Margaret

Was threaten'd by the rebels.

*Dante.*

By St. Mary!

This must be stopp'd. Sebastian, muster quickly

Your soldiers. I will go with you, and march

Upon the convent.

*Sebastian.*

Why not march as well

Upon Lord Ezzelin's castle after that?

*Dante.* Ay, that were well, use all your best  
endeavours,

And I will join you.

[*Exeunt* DANTE, SEBASTIAN, &c.]

SCENE 5. *A room in EZZELIN'S Castle (formerly  
ALONZO'S).*

*Enter EZZELIN.*

*Ezzelin.*



THOUGHT to reap success, and drink  
henceforth

From pleasure's choicest bowl; but O!  
dark thoughts

Intrude themselves upon my harass'd soul,  
And will not pass away. "Who sheddeth blood  
By man shall die !" a voice cries in my ears ;  
And keen remembrance of the death-scene ever  
Haunts me. Need I have done it? Ah ! 'tis vain  
To plead I only slew him to preserve her.  
That will not do ; words cannot mask design,  
And what was meant is what God looks upon.  
Yes, things are plain that never were before ;  
I wrapp'd my vengeance in a subtle web  
Woven of human sophistries, but God  
Has torn them from me, and in all its guilt  
I stand convicted of the sin of murder.  
O blood, blood, blood ! O dark, ensanguined  
stream !  
Red sap of hatred, do not float around me !  
Cannot sweet thoughts of love dispel thy bane ?  
I thought to burst the ties which kept me sever'd  
From Annette's side ; I slew him, and a sea  
Of crimson sweeps me from her into hell.  
Oh, God ! I have defied Thee, and Thy wrath  
Lights heavily : still, bid it fall on me.  
Spare her, the guiltless. Yet, O Annette, Annette !  
Would that I ne'er had seen thee ! O that innocence

Again were mine ! Have I not dragg'd thee down  
Into my ruin ? Cease these dreadful bodings !  
Where am I ?—in my room ? My head is burning,  
Yet I feel chilly ; what a murmur rings  
Around the castle !—nay, what am I doing ?  
Am I devoid of reason ? No, I know  
These walls, whereon the face of my dead father  
Frowns on me : here he died.

*Enter ANNETTE.*

*Annette.*

My Ezzelin,

You look quite wearied out ; come, let me sit  
Beside you.

*Ezzelin.* And you love me still, then, darling ?

*Annette.* Love you ? whom should I love but you ?

To-night

We start for Germany, I think you said ?

*Ezzelin.* We start to-night, but I would sleep  
awhile.

Stay with me ; do not go : I cannot sleep

Unless you stay with me.

[*Sleeps.*

*Annette.*

Ah, love at last

Ought to be ours ; let not deathly thoughts

Come 'twixt us two. The past is gone, then why

Call it again? Hark! Ezzelin stirs and murmurs;  
What does he say? [*Bends over the couch.*

*Ezzelin (in his sleep).* Yes, blood for blood! a  
harlot?

Nay, she is pure. They foully lie who dare  
Say otherwise. [*Waking.*

Annette, you do too much.  
You must not always think and care for me.  
Already your fair features grow quite pale,  
And your bright eyes are dim; but do not weep,  
I love thee better, dearest, than the name  
That men call honour.

*Annette.* Can I choose but weep?  
Ezzelin, I am unstain'd.

*Ezzelin.* Who dares deny it?  
And if you were an outcast, scorn'd by all  
Who ever knew you, you would find a refuge  
Upon my breast.

*Enter WARDER, hastily.*

*Warder.* Pardon, my lord, I come  
With heavy tidings; the inconstant rabble  
Have risen against you. For some time the city  
Has been upon the verge of revolution.



Outcasts from Germany, whose homes were burnt  
In the rebellion of the peasantry,  
Head the uprising ; they invest the castle  
And threaten to besiege you.

*Ezzelin (starting up).* But they dare not !  
They think that I am gentle and unlike  
My father, do they ? they shall find me still  
Alonzo's son. Man instant every wall,  
And let them do their worst : ere set of sun  
Full many a household shall be fatherless  
If they persist (*staggers back*). What has come over  
me ?

My head is dizzy. Go, good friend ; I'll come  
And help you soon. [*Exit* WARDER.

The room is reeling round !  
Support me, Annette. [*Falls on the couch.*

*Annette.* He has swoon'd away ;  
I must have help.

[*Exit ; soon after returns with an old WOMAN.*  
*Woman (looking at EZZELIN).* I know not what  
to say,

Signora ; he is struck by some disease.

*Annette.* Have you no leech ?—oh ! for the  
Virgin's sake

Help me !

*Woman.* No leech, Signora ; old Tommaso.  
Our chaplain, ran away when Lord Alonzo  
Was murder'd.

*Annette.* Can you not procure assistance ?  
There's money.

*Woman.* Money ! it will soon be had  
For nothing, for the rabble are besieging  
The castle, and I cannot stop with you.  
I must escape.

*Annette.* And will you leave your lord  
Untended, save by me ?

*Woman.* He will not need  
Thy care much longer ; death has set his mark  
Already on his brow. God keep you, lady.

[*Exit WOMAN.*

*Annette.* O no ! it cannot, cannot be ! not death.  
She has deceived me ! O my love, my Ezzelin !  
Speak to me !

*Ezzelin.* Who's there, my sister Lucia ?

*Annette.* No, I am here—thy Annette !

*Ezzelin.* Ah ! poor Annette !

What have they done to her ?

*Annette.* Lie quiet, dearest,

Till rest restore thee ; thou art over-wearied.

*Ezzelin.* How shall we flee ? O, why am I struck  
down

Now, while each moment's precious?—the old  
bloodhound,

Dante, will find us soon, and send his guards

To seize us, and our doom will be the stake.

Not for myself I dread it, but for thee.

O horrible ! to see thy glorious beauty

The prey of hungry flames.

*Annette* (*repressing a shudder*). The death thou  
diest

Shall not affright me ; side by side we'll perish.

*Ezzelin.* Ay, we may *perish* side by side indeed,

But, *after* death, will our two souls be placed

Together ? What if thou art doom'd to spend

Eternity with him whose life I took

For daring to be with thee here ?

*Annette.*

Oh, Ezzelin !

• Speak not like that ! you did it for the best.

*Ezzelin* (*bitterly*). Yes, for the best, I made my-  
self my God ;

How the real God requites me you may see.

And heavier punishment is yet in store.

*Annette.* And canst thou love me still—thy fatal  
curse?

*Ezzelin.* Love thee? yes, at the bar of angry God,  
When from His lips our endless doom goes forth,  
I *never* will forsake thee.

[ANNETTE *bursts into tears.*

Yes, weep thou canst ;  
I cannot weep. A murderer may not weep ;  
His tears are drops of blood.

*Enter* WARDER, *hastily.*

*Warder.* Lord Ezzelin,  
The rebels swarm on every side against us.  
Fierce, angry men stand marshall'd for the assault,  
All the worst spirits that thy father ruled  
Inflame the mob. I cannot hold the castle  
More than a day.

[EZZELIN *sinks back with a groan.*

*Annette.* He cannot hear thee. Thou wilt do thy  
best  
To help us, wilt thou not?

*Warder.*

I will, Signora.

[*Exit* WARDER.

*Ezzelin.* This is intolerable! Were I but freed

From this o'er-mastering fever, my right arm  
Should clear a way to safety for us both,  
Or we would die together. . . . Who is that  
Up in the corner pointing at us, Annette,  
With his lean arm ?

*Annette.* 'Tis but thy fancy, Ezzelin.

*Ezzelin.* No, 'tis Lorenzo, I can see the wound.  
He said he'd haunt me. Girl, he was thy husband :  
Drive him away.

*[Starts up in a terrified manner ; ANNETTE  
vainly strives to soothe him. At last he  
sinks back exhausted.]*

*End of Fourth Act.*





ACT V.

SCENE I. *A room in LORENZO'S Castle.*

*Enter TWO OFFICERS OF THE INQUISITION.*

*1st Officer.*



AND so the rebels burn'd St. Margaret's  
convent?

*2nd Officer.* We only came in time to  
save the chapel.

The mob were howling round it, and the sisters,  
In terror of their lives, lay at the foot  
Of the High Altar.

*1st Officer.* But you came in time  
To save them from the threaten'd violence?

*2nd Officer.* Yes, old Sebastian took good care  
of that :

The nuns were rescued, and the rebels' corpses

Lie thick around the sacred edifice.

Sebastian, when our arms at last grew weary,  
Bade us desist from slaughter, and commanded  
That I, with twoscore lances, should conduct  
The sisters here, the while the remnant march'd  
To the assault of Ezzelin's castle.

*1st Officer.*

Good,

That is well done; where are the sisters now?

*2nd Officer.* At vespers in the chapel.

*Enter DANTE.*

*Dante (to 1st Officer).* What tidings bring you?

*2nd Officer.* None yet, most reverend.

*Dante.* Are the sisters here?

*2nd Officer.* Yes, in the chapel.

*Dante.*

That will do, my sons;

Retire, and let me know when news arrives.

[*Exeunt OFFICERS.*

*Dante (goes forward to the window).* The scene  
unchanged, as when I trod these floors

So many months ago, and saw the moon

Shine on the calm blue waters, while around,

Each tree and rocky point rose sharp and clear

In the cold, silvery light. Now blackest darkness

Lies on the scene ; the stars of heaven are hid  
By the grey host of clouds, and winds are still.  
So awful is the calm, it seems to speak  
Of boding tempests coming o'er the sea.  
(For ever doth a fearful calm precede  
The rush of coming storms). Yes, here I stood,  
And mused upon their fate ; in other hands  
The issue lies. O God ! I tried to save them !  
Now naught remains but stern, unflinching justice  
For both the guilty lovers, and my voice  
Must speak their sentence. Lord, from Thee I took  
The dread commission to absolve or judge ;  
Teach me to rightly wield the dreadful sword !  
Oh ! awful power to a mortal given—  
Yea to a sinner ! and I cannot shun  
The strict account which such a task demands  
At the dread Bar where He shall sit, while earth  
And starry skies roll backwards in dismay,  
While round Him blaze the countless seraphim—  
A sea of angel faces, flashing swords—  
While the red lurid waves of hell toss high  
Upon the left hand, where the wretched gather  
In silent agony. May those dread eyes  
Smile on me then, with calm, approving glance !



Will it be so? Can e'en a Saviour's blood  
Cleanse all away—that dark array of sins  
Open and secret?—nor my sins alone,  
But theirs, who in the hush'd confessional  
Have ask'd my counsels, and through them have lost  
The narrow path; when these arise to judgment,  
Will they not plead against me? Yet one ray—  
But one—breaks through the clouds, that never yet  
Have I sought after slothful ease, nor stay'd  
The work He gave me; and I know, I know  
My labour in the Lord was not in vain.  
Lord, I presume not! at Thy nail-pierced feet  
I fain would lay my life, its cares, its sorrows—  
Yea, e'en its sins! dare I to hope at last  
For me the gates may open? O! could they weep  
Whose tears the awful Father wipes away,  
Would it not be when they behold that Form  
Their sins have wounded—see the Spotless One—  
Know that they cannot leave His side again;  
And then cast back a shuddering glance of anguish  
On e'en the least offence which weigh'd Him down  
Beneath the Cross, or wove the crown of thorn?  
Nay, we shall never know the fearful nature  
Of our black deeds till sin and pain are fled

In Heaven's "eternal bowers;" for He will'd  
Alone to tread the wine-press—He alone,  
Wearing a heavenly nature, bow'd His soul  
To wear the loathsome robe of sin's defilement;  
On earth we know not half its misery,  
In Heaven all sins are banish'd . . . . .  
Hark! the sisters  
Lift up glad voices to the blessèd One  
Who saved them. How the flood of holy song  
Swells up in rich, sweet music to the roof  
Of the high castle chapel!—how it floats  
Among the fretted pillars!

HYMN OF THE NUNS TO THE VIRGIN.

*Single Voice.*

On Calvary, beneath the Cross, the Maiden Mother  
stands,  
And gazes on the thorn-wreath'd brow, the bleeding  
feet and hands;  
Her brow with bitter grief is pale, her eyes with  
tears are dim,  
But neither human grief nor tears shall turn her  
eyes from Him.

Heart-broken, while unearthly pangs her blessèd  
spirit rend,

She lingers there beside the tree, and meekly waits  
the end.

Yet still on Him alone she thinks—her Son—and  
strives to pray

The death-hour may be hasten'd, and the chalice  
pass away.

*Full Chorus.*

Hail heart with sorrows wounded !

Hail eyes with tear-drops stain'd !

By mocking foes surrounded,

By scornful ones disdain'd.

For us to Jesus pleading,

Oh ! make our spirits share

Thy pangs, and, with Thee bleeding,

The marks of Jesus wear.

*Single Voice.*

Fair Virgin Queen, enthroned above, where sorrows  
may not come,

And troubled hearts, from care released, rest in the  
Father's home,

And virgin souls around the Spouse for evermore  
shall see  
The glorious One who bore the Cross and set the  
captive free,  
  
Look down on us, who lowly kneel before the  
golden gate,  
Who through the midnight watches drear the rising  
dawn await;  
And grant that though on earth our brows must  
wear the thorny wreath,  
And we must uncomplaining tread the path of pain  
and death,

*Full Chorus.*

That when before His throne who bled  
The thorns are laid aside,  
And crowns of glory deck the head  
Of every faithful bride,

We too our grateful songs may raise  
With them, the warfare done,  
And aye in "sinless anthems" praise  
The Mother and the Son.

*Dante.* How sweet the varying strain ! it calls  
to mind

The words of him, before whose dazzled eye  
The golden doors of Heaven were oped—who saw  
The crystal sea, the emerald rainbow blaze  
Around the jasper throne, and caught the sound  
Of many waters, as the song unknown  
Burst from ten thousand times ten thousand voices ;  
While, like the waves beneath the midnight moon,  
The white-robed hosts bow'd low before the throne,  
And cast their starry coronets at the feet  
Of Him who sat thereon ! . . . . .

How long, how long  
Wilt Thou delay Thy coming, holy Lord ?  
The skies are dark above us, everywhere  
Foes press around the Church—her chosen rulers  
Are sold to wickedness ! Is this the city  
Which came descending from the highest Heaven—  
Immanuel's bride, robed in the righteousness  
Of saints and martyrs ? yea, men spurn her now,  
Reject her doctrines, batter down her walls  
And mock her children . . . . .

Yet from many a heart  
Prayer rises like the dewy breath of morning.

Come, Lord, delay not, we are waiting here—  
Avenge Thy saints, defend Thy chosen bride,  
Let the star-spangled clouds of midnight flee  
Before Thy chariot wheels !

Lord, Lord, I trust

The end is coming. Faith grows less and less ;  
Men strive to use the Spirit's sword to wound  
The Church, not to refute the wiles of Satan.

And, Father, I would plead for those two souls  
In danger of Thy wrath. Oh ! turn them yet,  
For all is possible to Thee. I strove

To save them—now I cannot ; be the doom  
Of the weak flesh the saving of their souls  
Before Thy Bar ; and steel my shrinking heart  
Against weak mercy. Thou wilt bear to say,  
“ Depart, ye cursed ! ” Shall these lips refuse  
To speak the sentence of Thy bride, which dooms  
But to a few brief moments of the flame ?

God give me strength to do Thy will, whatever  
May be the cost.

*Enter OFFICER.*

*Officer.* Sebastian has arrived and waits to see  
you.

He brings important tidings.

*Dante.*

Bid him enter ;—

Yet, stay, I first would speak to the good chap-  
lain

Ulberto ; let Sebastian wait me here.

SCENE 2. *A room in LORENZO'S Castle. Enter*  
*SEBASTIAN and 2ND OFFICER.*

*2nd Officer.*

HAT makes the Inquisition interfere  
About Lorenzo's death? The Court of  
Venice

Is bound to do full justice on the murderer.

*Sebastian.* Aye, but the Court of Venice works  
too slowly ;

Besides, Lord Ezzelin is accused of heresy.

That is enough for us : the Holy Office

Has warrant for the deed ; if we perform

The business of the State, the State must pay us.

Why, had we waited till the proud Dalmatians<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The troops of the State.

Were ready for the journey, we had found  
Our prey escaped.

*2nd Officer.* But now you have him safe?

*Sebastian.* Aye, safe enough, him and his lady  
too.

I have not seen him, but a sentinel  
Is station'd at his door, another watches  
Below the window, and in every corner  
Of the long, winding staircase stands a spearman ;  
A ring of soldiers watch around the castle,  
Whose camp-fires flare against the chilly dawn  
That rises o'er the hill-tops.

*2nd Officer.* Then you know

That he is there?

*Sebastian.* I heard his voice, and more,  
After the rebels fled, the castle warders  
Lower'd the drawbridge to the Church's banner,  
And I found entrance. Well, a warder told me  
That scarce an hour before, as he was watching,  
Lord Ezzelin pass'd him, and, in truth, the soldier  
Deem'd him at first a spectral shape, he seem'd  
In such strange guise.

*2nd Officer.* But why have you not seen him?

*Sebastian.* The father Dante bade me wait for him



Before I made the arrest. I know not why,  
But such were his commands.

*2nd Officer.* Where will you take them?

*Sebastian.* We have no lack of dungeons for  
such guests.

Their doom is sure enough ; I always know  
By father Dante's looks when he means death.  
Besides, thou knowest Ezzelin's life is forfeit  
Unto the State for murder.

*2nd Officer.* But methinks

The State would prove more gentle than the  
Church ;

The axe or cord are easier than the stake.

*Sebastian.* Ay, that is so, I've seen enough of both.

*2nd Officer.* Hast ever seen a woman burn'd,  
Sebastian?

*Sebastian.* Yes, scores of times ; I never like to  
see it.

I think there's something tender in my nature ;  
A woman seems to me a woman still,  
Though thrice a heretic. I always damp  
The straw when females suffer.

*Second Officer.*

And the smoke

Soon ends their sufferings?

*Sebastian.* Yes, oft they die  
Before the flame has even scorch'd them. Comrade,  
Whate'er the Church ordains must needs be right,  
Nor may we question aught that she requires ;  
Yet still 'tis strange, when the grey smoke curls up  
Around some writhing girl, whose piercing screams  
Ring through the torture-chamber, to behold  
On the black wall the Virgin's image placed  
As if she smiled upon the dreadful work !

*Enter DANTE.*

*Dante.* Deem not she smiles, Sebastian ; her  
meek heart

Is wrung by anguish keener than the victim's,  
And thou art over-bold to speak like this.

*Sebastian.* Pardon me, father ; but thou knowest  
ill thoughts  
Infect our hearts at times.

*Dante.* Restrain them, then.  
Think'st thou the Church grieves not for such frail  
children ?

I tell thee, couldst thou but endure to gaze  
One moment down the drear abyss of hell,  
And see the torments of the damn'd who burn

In quenchless flame, thou wouldst be glad if  
aught,

However painful to the flesh, could save  
From that undying fire, and deem a death  
More easy dearly bought. But come, thy tidings?

*Sebastian.* The castle is surrounded by your  
soldiers.

*Dante.* And know you aught of Ezzelin?

*Sebastian.* Father, they say that for three days at  
least,

Ezzelin has scarce been seen or heard of. Some  
Tell me that he is ill; the lady Annette  
Is with him—this I know.

*Dante.* And you are certain  
They cannot flee? 'Tis well. Now muster quickly  
Your soldiers. You, Sebastian, have done well,  
And merit our approval. [*Exit SEBASTIAN.*]

*Dante.* So Ezzelin is ill,—at least they say so;  
Keeps himself from his servants, and the girl  
Annette alone is with him. I must question  
The servants as to what they know: at present  
Our only certain charge is heresy,  
And that he may refute. As to the murder  
I feel no doubt, but proof is not sufficient—

At least, I think not ; while poor Annette's guilt,  
Though very black, takes not a hue like his.  
Heresy, I trust, has not yet tainted her ;  
And as to murder, I can hardly think  
She joined in it. . . . Ha ! I will summon Lucia  
To go with me, and give the unfortunate  
Unto her charge : she yet may clear herself,  
And Lucia will do more with her than I.  
Ho ! Andreas !

*Enter ANDREAS.*

Summon the Lady Lucia  
To meet me here at once. Poor girl ! for her  
[*Exit ANDREAS.*

'Twill be no pleasant task to see her brother  
Arrested for a crime like this. O love !  
When unrestrain'd by piety or reason,  
What ills thou workest on a noble nature !  
For Ezzelin show'd many a hope of virtue.  
Poor wretch ! how blighted is the stately promise  
Of thy young life !

*Enter LUCIA.*

*Lucia.*

You sent for me, my father ?

*Dante.* Yes, Lucia: I have words of grave  
import

To tell you ; can you bear to hear me tell them ?

*Lucia.* Speak ! I will listen ; if I must, I can.

(*Clasping her hands.*) Saint Mary give me strength,  
if, as my heart

Forbodes, you have to speak to me of Ezzelin !

*Dante.* You love your brother, Lucia : now that  
love

Must prove itself. I grieve to say that Ezzelin  
Is charged with heresy.

*Lucia.* O, father, no !

Say anything—yes, anything but this !

My brother ! oh, my brother ! hast thou drunk

Of that accursèd poison ? Father ! father !

I would have died rather than hear this tale.

(*Struggles to repress her emotion.*) What can I do for  
thee ?

*Dante.* Annette is with him ;

But she, I trust, is guiltless of this crime.

I want your aid, my daughter, to discover

All that she knows about another matter,

Of which I'll tell you while we journey there.

*Lucia.* Yes, father, it is well ; I'll come with thee.

*Dante.* Come then ! the morn is rising cold and cheerless ;

We must not linger here.

[*Exeunt DANTE and LUCIA.*

SCENE 3. *A Room in EZZELIN'S Castle.*

*EZZELIN lying on a couch, ANNETTE sitting by him.*

*Annette.*



**H**E sleeps awhile ! The fury has abated  
Which madden'd him ; exhaustion's  
deadening calm

Pervades his sinking frame. I thought I loved him  
Long years ago : what was that love to this ?  
Dearer, far dearer, in this agony  
Art thou. O could I only soothe thy pangs  
Or share them with thee ! in thy pains I'd find  
Some consolation. Ezzelin ! for thy sake  
What could be bitter ? Ah ! I fear not now  
My coming doom. O may kind death remove thee  
Ere that last vengeance ! Do not say the guilt  
Alone was thine : I was the cause of all.  
On me may vengeance come : I can defy it.

And when stern Dante's satellites invade  
Thy dying chamber, they shall find me ready,  
For I will not remain behind thee long.

*Ezzelin.* Why are they there?

*Annette.*

Who, dearest?

*Ezzelin.* Seest thou not

How they are gathering round me—how their eyes  
Blaze, and their snaky tresses wave and toss  
Upon the hell-born wind? Fiends! fly! begone!

*Annette.* There's no one here, indeed, but you  
and I.

*Ezzelin.* No one but you and I? then why that  
noise—

Those frantic shouts mix'd with the shriek of wind?  
A thousand death-cries blended into one—  
Loud shouts of furious wrath and wild alarm?  
They scale the walls (*leaps up*), we'll hurl them  
down again;  
Think you my tower will yield? Down! down, I  
say!

And be your direful screams drown'd in the blood  
Of dying rebels! Annette, where's my sword?

*Annette.* I cannot keep him back! Oh, Ezzelin,  
Cease these wild ravings!

*Ezzelin.* But they shall not hurt you—  
Ay, you shall rather die beneath my blade  
Than be their prey. My sword, I say !—my sword !  
I will not yield. . . Ah no, 'tis but some dream ;  
'Tis but the wind that raves around the castle,  
And lashes up the waves. . . Who sits beside me ?—  
An angel form with waving golden hair  
And eyes of icy blue. How pale and white  
She looks ! But who is it ? I know I've seen her  
Before ; where was it ? in the German castle ?  
No, no ; it was not there.

*Annette.* 'Tis I, thy bride—  
Annette.

*Ezzelin.* O yes ! 'tis you ; I have been wandering.  
How goes the day ?

*Annette.* The sun is going down,

*Ezzelin.* And why are you so pale ?

*Annette (trying to smile).* 'Tis nothing, Ezzelin.

*Ezzelin.* But you are ill and worn with watching  
me.

Lie down awhile, and let me sit by you.

*Annette.* No, I'm not tired, and if I were, by thee  
It would be sweet to watch. O try to sleep !  
You frighten me by the wild things you say :



Sleep while you can, love.

*Ezzelin (lies down and sleeps, but soon starts up).*

Annette, see ! the bar  
Is set 'twixt earth and heaven, and the Judge  
Descends amid the clouds. Hark ! hark ! how loud  
That fearful tramp is sounding ! and the ground  
Swells up and bursts : see ! the dead rise all gory.  
Lorenzo comes—Annette, he comes again !  
I thought I'd slain him.

*Annette (looking round apprehensively).* There is  
no one near us.

*Ezzelin.* The sunset glow shines redly on the  
wall,  
Darkening the shade above ; across the light  
I saw him pass, and still the red wound stream'd,  
And the blood bubbled up . . . . .

Mount, mount and ride !  
The chargers scent the dead ; they plunge, and toss  
The gory leaves aloft. Spur on ! spur on !  
Will the night never pass ? See how the trees  
Stand dark against the leaden skies of midnight !  
Ride on ! This ghastly wood must end at last.  
See the moon gleaming through a sudden rift,  
White on yon tree, where lie the rolling leaves

In many a heap—ha ! fatal spot ! again  
We pass the grave, love. Annette, look not back ;  
The steeds of those who bear the dead man's soul  
Sweep on behind us, and the owlet screams  
The welcome of the grave.

*Annette.*

O ! hush, my own !

Didst thou not rescue me from cruel taunts  
And a dead life of misery ?—can the Father  
Who pities the unfortunate be angry  
With thee for this ?

*Ezzelin.*

Cut off from life unshriven !

No time to plead for pardon from his Maker !  
This weighs me down. How shall I hope for mercy ?  
Where can I turn ? the blood-red stain of murder—  
Who can release from it ? And must I perish ?  
Is there no hope for Ezzelin ?

*Annette.* How shall I comfort him ?—for me he  
did it,

Yet still it cannot be the sin he thinks it.  
Was I not struggling in Lorenzo's grasp,  
Who would have kill'd me ? Ah, this cruel struggle !  
I cannot bear to see it : and I feel  
My strength is sinking ; yet I must not yield  
To this strange weakness which creeps o'er my frame,

Till all is o'er with him.

*Ezzelin (leaping up).* There is no hope !

Despair, be thou my ruler ! in thy depths

I'll find some courage yet ; unfearing still

I drive towards death's sea. Then, dead Lorenzo,

Think not to fright me ; for my deadly hate

Towards thee when living shall not be diminish'd

When thou art dead—ay, hate can conquer fear !

*[Seizes his sword and catches up a light.*

Where art thou, spectral form ? I will unearth thee !

Thy shroud shall feel my rapier's bloody point !

Ha, ha ! my strength returns, and savage vengeance

Has nerved me ! Annette, let me go ! you shall not

hold me !

I'll track him through the bowels of the earth.

Stay me not !

*[Pushes her from him and rushes out of the room.*

*ANNETTE staggers back and falls on the couch.*

*Annette.* What is this sudden weakness which

comes o'er me

When most I need my strength ? I must give way—

I cannot stand it longer ! Ezzelin !

Come back ! oh, do not leave me here alone !

I would not thus have left thee, Ezzelin !

A raging pain has seized my head, and dews,  
Chill as the death-sweat, gather on my brow.  
All, all is dark. He will return again,  
He must ! Oh ! what if he be gone for ever ?  
I must be there when he returns—I must—  
For who will tend his wants, and soothe his anguish,  
Which gains the mastery even o'er his reason,  
If I be helpless ? Oh ! while life remains  
I would be found by him, for I have wrong'd him :  
My love has been his ruin.

SCENE 4. *A Room in EZZELIN'S Castle.*

*ANNETTE lying on a couch.*

*Annette.*



WHAT ! will my beating heart for ever tell  
Its tale, and strike the pulses in my  
temples

Till all my body seems alive with sounds  
Ringing and bursting ? O ! my forehead burns  
Hotter and hotter, and I cannot turn  
To gain relief, I am so very weak.  
In vain I close my eyes, sleep will not come,  
I only feel the sickening pulses beat

Like hammers on the brain whene'er I let  
The lids close o'er the pupils, and I cease,  
And stare at the grey twilight. Ezzelin !  
Say, are you there ? Ezzelin ! Ezzelin ! wake !  
He is not there. I am alone—alone.  
Oh, Ezzelin ! I never loved but you !—  
O ! do not leave me, husband ! . . . . .

See, he comes,  
And I shall fling my arms around his neck,  
And lay my weary head upon his shoulder. . . . .  
O ! God ! it is not he, it is another !  
Why lookest thou thus, Lorenzo ? 'Twas not I !  
Why does the blood still trickle ?—long ago  
Thy bones were laid among the rotting leaves !  
He stretches out his earth-stain'd arms. O ! save  
me !

He holds me ! O those eyes, in which the worms  
Are crawling, glare on mine ! I will not come !  
God pity me ! O ! do not let him have me !  
Keep off ! keep off ! . . . . .  
. . . . . It is a horrid dream—  
This fever'd couch, and I shall wake to health  
When daylight comes ; but O ! long hours of dark-  
ness

Must pass before the sun, and I may die—  
 Die in this darken'd room, while blackest shadows  
 Close o'er my form. O ! where is Ezzelin?  
 Ezzelin ! your Annette wants you ! for your sake  
 She gave up all—her honour and her God.  
 O Ezzelin ! come ! I should not fear to die  
 If you were here ; we two would die together,  
 And in some lonely wood, where sunbeams fall  
 With crimson glories in the summer days,  
 And the great moon at night looks down, we too  
 Would slumber side by side . . . . .

. . . . .

Oh, I am dying !

He will not come. I feel that other beings  
 Are in this room ; the roof is sinking down  
 Towards me, and around my bed I see  
 Old faces that I loved—yet not the same :  
 They are not angry, but they gaze on me  
 With eyes of grave-born earnestness and wonder.  
 There stands my Father, there stern Dante frowns,  
 And at his side a lovely maiden kneels,—  
 Yes, lovely, but her neck is red and scarr'd  
 As if by fire, and she looks with sorrow  
 Towards me. There is Lucia ! O ! my friend,

Speak to me ! See ! she lifts her tearful eyes  
 To Heaven for me. O ! dearest, best of all  
 I ever knew, would that I too had worn  
 The robe of serge ! . . . . .

. . . . . Will the day never come ?

No, not for me ; my soul will soon be gone  
 And fly with flying shadows. Dreams are past,  
 Mists float before my eyes : where shall I go ?  
 The bed is yielding under me, the floor  
 Rises and sinks, and voices seem to ring  
 Around my dying bed. . . . .

. . . . . O ! God have mercy !

I own my sin—the vow of lawless love  
 Unbless'd by Thee. Have mercy on my soul,  
 Ere she goes forth into the dreary void !  
 I hunger'd after love, and love destroy'd me.  
 Death comes, he wraps me in his arms . . . forgive  
 . . . . . (Dies).  
 . . . . .

*Enter EZZELIN, with a light.*

*Ezzelin.* I will return to her. I cannot sit  
 Alone ; that bloody form is ever near me !  
 I do not see it—no, I do not see it ;

But still I know it hovers round about me.  
I hear the stealthy footfall of the dead  
Behind me when I tread the castle stair.  
But now the door is shut.

Oh ! here's poor Annette—  
Asleep ? Yes, fast asleep. How fair she looks !  
She was not well to-day. When was it, though,  
She told me she was ill ? Was it to-day,  
Or yesterday, or when I walk'd with her  
In the rose-garden ? Nay, it was not then ;  
At least, I think not—I am never certain.  
Since last I saw her I have seen such sights !—  
Black pirates, torn by sharks, amid the sea-weed,  
Down far below the water ; while white owls  
Hooted at them, as through the blood-red mists  
Which veil'd the autumn moon they wing'd their  
flight.

Nay, is that Annette sleeping there ? How cold  
She feels !—well, it is cold to-night. Lorenzo  
Can never rest among those chilly leaves,  
And so he comes to warm his mouldering bones  
By Annette's fire. Ha ! ha ! old man, art there ?  
Come from the corner !—make us sport, and wake  
Thy fair one from her sleep ; she dreams of thee !



Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha ! Now, Annette, rouse yourself  
 And kiss him ; let thy clinging arms embrace  
 His neck, and thy long golden tresses blend  
 With his white, festering locks. Ha ! get thee gone  
 Back to the midnight wood—fit haunt for him  
 Who stole my love ! Oh ! flames of hell consume  
 Thy wither'd form, and greedy devils tear  
 Thy mouldy entrails !—thou hast kill'd her, slave !  
 Annette, awake ! awake ! the cocks are crowing !  
 No, she is dead—is dead—and I will die  
 Beside her. But a growing chill comes on ;  
 My limbs are held, my body slowly sinks  
 Into weak stupor. Why destroy the body  
 And leave the brain still strong ? Oh, pitiless !  
 A power restrains me, and I cannot move—  
 Not e'en to press, with cold and quivering lips,  
 Her death-pale cheek. (*Sinks into a chair and drops*  
*his sword.*)

But now the night of reason quick approaches,  
 Moonless and starless, and a floating cloud  
 Bears her from me unto the angel bands.

[*Recovering, he looks around him.*

This is my death-stroke ! Life is fading fast

(Like dreams and shadows when the sun lifts up  
His burning face behind the misty hills).  
Visions of dread are gone, reality  
Comes in their place. Oh ! rather let me know  
The wildest scenes of horror that e'er seized  
The madman's teeming brain, than see the truth—  
This room, this chair, my prison, and my wife  
Dead at my feet ! I cannot turn my eyes  
From her—my darling—cold and ghastly white  
Beneath the glimmering dawn she lies. Lorenzo,  
Happier art thou in thy dim forest grave  
Than I, thy slayer. Come not now to haunt me !  
Upbraid me not ! A little, little while,  
And I shall be as thou—perchance, with thee  
In the drear spirit-world. *There* take thy vengeance  
And wreak thy wrongs upon my soul ; and hers  
With thine shall blend to scourge with bloody  
whips  
The murderer who slew ye both. Oh, Annette !  
I, who was thine—yes, thine alone—have kill'd  
thee,—  
Crush'd thy young life and closed thy glorious eyes,  
Never, oh ! never to behold thee more  
In life, my darling ! . . . God, Thy hell has nothing

More dread than this—to linger dying here  
With my dead love beside me, and to see  
Nothing but that dead face, so pale, so sweet,  
Until the morning of the day shall come  
And bring life's eventide! Oh! haste thee, death!  
Three hours sure have past! No! 'tis three  
minutes!

How fast run on our thoughts when death is after!  
How would my quivering heart have burst for  
horror

Once in a time like this! But now all's past—  
The blood, the nerve, the sinew of the soul  
All turn'd to dust; my limbs refuse obedience  
To the fierce dictates of the raging brain,  
Or that cold steel that glitters on the floor  
Had snatch'd me from the world. I cannot  
reach it!

I must wait here for death. . . . Oh, God! in  
mercy

Blast me with madness; let Thy hell begin!  
Better to know the worst than linger here  
In dread anticipation. . . .  
. . . . 'Tis in vain  
That I would think myself beyond the tomb,

Among the spirits ; all is real around me,  
 All touch'd with life—the trees, the yellow dawn,  
 And the dead form beside me. There the bloom  
 Of life dies out . . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 Another life *must* come—the past pursues me,  
 And rages wildly round my fearful soul.  
 Cease, cease, dim shadows! . . . . .  
 . . . . . This world is not small—  
 The world of men ; there are large desert tracks  
 Where men may dwell unheeded and unwatch'd ;  
 But the dark world of spirits, the unknown,  
 Is larger far—a dreary void, to which  
 Death soon will drive me. Shall I not discover  
 Some lonely place where I may safely rest  
 At anchor, while the phantoms of the past  
 Seek me and cannot find . . . . .  
 . . . . . The future looms  
 Like night-clouds, driving o'er the tossing waves,  
 Black and impenetrable !

*[Starts up, and staggers against the wall.]*

The gloomy mists  
 Fill up the room, and wrap me in their folds,  
 Shooting cold chills upon my heart and brain ;

But Annette's face shines through the murky  
vapours,  
Like the white moon through night-fogs, when the  
raven  
Croaks from the ivied crag! Ha! ha! they come!  
Dim and uncertain round me, forms of ill—  
Hideous and mocking faces fill the air.  
Yet still I see her lying there. I'll turn,  
I will not look again. The white swan sings  
Before he dies, and so will I. Come, listen  
To Ezzelin's death-song, spirits born of evil!

*[Scratches on the wall with his dagger for  
some time, and then drops senseless on  
the floor.]*

SCENE 5. *The same Room.*

*Dante (speaking outside the door).*



SEBASTIAN, stay without, and Lucia also,  
Till I have seen the room.

*Sebastian.* The room is still as death;  
some dreadful deed

Has taken place!

Dante. Ay, you must force the door.

[*The door is forced open, and DANTE enters.*]

Dante. 'Tis very still. (*Seeing the body.*)

What, Annette here, asleep?

No, 'tis no sleep! (*starts back*) dead? dead! Oh,

God of justice!

And has thy justice fallen? Wretched girl!

Is this the end of thine unholy love,

Thy treacherous marriage, and deceitful vows

To dead Lorenzo, when thy weak heart spurn'd

The Saviour's gentle call—"Come unto me

All ye that labour and are heavy laden,

And I will give you rest?"

Yea, love has been thine idol: thou hast follow'd

Along the burning path from sin to sin,

Ending in murder and a harlot's bed,

Then death at last, uncared-for and unseen.

(*Seeing EZZELIN stretched on the floor.*) And there he

lies, thy guilty paramour,

Smitten with drivelling madness. For a face,

Fond youth, thy soul was given; from my hands

Your doom is taken, and thy guilty passion

And fatal heresies shall cry for vengeance

To Him in whose right hand the lurid bolt

Gleams ever ready. Thou thrice-damn'd apostate,  
Luther! another chain is forged for thee—  
A heavier weight of wrath to sink thee lower  
(If yet a lower place is found for thee),  
By this, thy victims' deaths, Annette and Ezzelin,  
Betray'd by thee—ay, so the Church foretold,  
That in the north the seat of Satan lay.  
What if from Germany the Antichrist  
Was doom'd to come, in likeness of a priest?—  
I know not! (*Turns to EZZELIN.*)  
Oh, miserable pair! the dying youth  
Plays with dead Annette's hair, and fondles it.  
Yet life remains; the spark may shine a moment—  
Salvation yet be Ezzelin's. Saviour, grant it!  
(*Bends over EZZELIN.*) Ezzelin, Ezzelin! speak!  
can you not hear me?

*Ezzelin.* The night-fiend calls! The gibbering  
spectres run,  
And crouch in hollow trees and weedy caverns  
To hide them from his burning eyes of flame  
Who comes to drag them down.

[*Lifts his head and glares at DANTE.*

*Dante (holding up the crucifix).* Oh! look, my  
son,

Upon the blessed sign !—that brow was torn,  
 Those limbs were mangled for thy sake ; His wounds  
 Plead for thee. . . Fiends, give way before His sign  
 Who led you captive ! Father, grant Thy child  
 One moment of full consciousness to pray  
 For pardon ! think upon His death who bought him !  
 Shall that dread toil be wasted ?<sup>1</sup> Ezzelin,  
 Turn not away ! . . . He will not look ; he buries  
 His face among the straw. I'll send for Lucia ;  
 Her voice may kindle yet his dying senses  
 To know his need of mercy. [*Exit.*

*Dante* (*re-entering with LUCIA*). I need thee not  
 For sterner duties than a sister's love  
 Would fain bestow ; their doom no more  
 Depends on mortal voice. May He support thee,  
 Who, when the sun was veil'd, knew of this hour,  
 And bore thy sorrows then !

*Lucia.* Oh ! what has happen'd ?  
 They are not dead ?

*Dante.* Annette is dead, but——

*Lucia.* Annette ?  
 Yes : there she lies. O ! see how deadly pale,—

<sup>1</sup> “Tantus labor non sit cassus.”—DIES IRÆ.



How wasted are those features which were once  
Fairest among the fair. What lines has anguish  
Traced on that youthful face! the teeth are  
clench'd

As if she struggled in death's cold embrace,  
And that sad smile that lingers on her lips  
Tells more of pain than rapture! (*Bends over the  
body.*) Look, my father!

In her cold hand she grasps the crucifix,  
As if she fain had press'd it to her lips  
In the death agony. (*Clasps her hands.*) . . . . Thank  
God for it!

The lamb had wander'd far amid the wilds,  
Yet, in the darkest eventide, He sought her,—  
The thorn-crowned One,—and led the wanderer  
home.

*Dante.* God grant it has been so! God grant  
her guiltless

Of heresy. But, Lucia, leave the dead  
Unto her Judge and Saviour. Turn to him—  
The living—who still lingers at the gate  
Of death.

*Lucia.* What! Ezzelin! Where is he, father?

*Dante* (*pointing to Ezzelin*). There he lies!

*Lucia.* Yes, but not living! See his latest words;  
He seems to have fallen down in writing them.

*(Reads on the wall.)*

No more! no more! the night falls fast,  
The shades drive o'er the sea;  
And flies my bark before the blast  
Of drear immensity.  
The voices of the woeful past  
Are far off following me,  
But not a look before be cast  
To tell what hence may be.

Death, with his drooping, shadowy wings,  
And eyes of silence cold,  
Has launch'd me, while the seagull sings  
Her deathly tales of old.  
And now the world far from me flies,  
And ghostly billows moan;  
The closing twilight of dim skies  
Shall——speed me——on——alone!

*Dante.* There he stopp'd short! I fear we  
cannot rouse him  
Now from his deadly trance.

*Lucia.*

O ! I could weep

My heart away, and sigh my soul to air  
To see him, whom I once so prided in,  
Thus weaker than the weakest, and so stain'd  
With blackest sin unshriven——.

*[EZZELIN groans ; LUCIA kneeling by him.]*

Ezzelin !

Speak to me, dearest, but one word !

*Ezzelin.*

Where's Annette ?

*Lucia.* Do you not know me ?*Ezzelin.* Annette ! you have watch'd

Too long beside me ; you are wearing out.  
Kiss me and good night ! I must see your eyes  
Look bright again to-morrow.

*Dante.*

He knows thee not !

His thoughts are still with her !

*Ezzelin.*

Turn not away.

Though all men hate you, I will never leave you.  
Sob out your grief in my arms ; the world is  
nothing

When we two are together.

*Lucia.*

A deadly change

Is stealing o'er his features ! There is one  
Standing beside him whom we do not see.

[*To DANTE, in a voice of smothered agony.*

Pray for him ere the spirit quit her frame.

[*Kneels, and clasps her hands.*

*Dante (kneeling by Ezzelin, and supporting him in his arms).* Oh, Son of God! Who on the bitter Cross

(When every human sin upon Thee press'd,  
And the Eternal turn'd His face away),  
Didst cry, "My God! my God! why hast Thou  
then

Forsaken me?" think of that fearful hour,  
And by those seven dread words, and by the love  
Which loved us from the first, be with this sinner.  
If it be possible blot out the doom  
Decreed against him, and in Thy dear hands  
Receive the parting soul.

*Ezzelin.*

All is too late!

If you must fade then I must follow you.  
My life has leap'd into its last long flicker,  
And now is sunk in smouldering.

*Dante.*

All is over:

Death's hand's upon him!

*Ezzelin.*

Farewell! [*Dies.*

*Dante.*

At that word

He breathed his soul out. Ay, 'twas well like him  
Bidding the world farewell.

*Lucia (bursting into an agony of tears).* And do  
we part

For ever thus? Can neither prayer nor suffering  
Gain thee release? For ever and for ever  
Must thou be banish'd from the Father's presence?  
(*To DANTE.*) You are of those to whom the Master gave  
To bind and loose. Tell me, I here implore you,  
Is death the end of hope? O! but one word  
To say my prayers could aid him, and I'd give  
My life to prayer, and wear the biting scars  
Of scourges keen, as gladly as a maiden  
Deck'd out for marriage wears her bridal gems;  
And day and night I'd bathe my Saviour's feet  
With streaming tears! O Ezzelin! my brother!  
Oh! had I died for thee it had been well!  
Or if thy soul had flown to meet thy God  
Wearing the robe unstain'd, I had not wept!  
But now my lips can hardly speak the words—  
"Not as I will, but as Thou willest, Father."  
My heart is broken; life can never more  
Be aught but endless sorrow for thy doom.

[*Hides her face in her robe.*]

*Dante.* Would I could comfort thee ; but lift  
thine eyes

To higher beings than poor sinful man.

Dost thou grieve thus for *one* o'erwhelm'd by sin ?

Then think of Him, who bore the scourge, the  
thorns,

The blood-stain'd agony beneath the olives !

And yet in vain, for many, was His passion :

They will not come to Him ! And look to her,

The blessèd one ! What are thy pangs to hers ?

Pierced through with seven sorrows like a sword !

Yet, Lucia, I can tell thee this : God often

By our sufferings works His awful will !

And, who can tell, if to those favour'd ones

Who clasp the bitter Cross, like Magdalene,

And kiss the bleeding feet, and strive to suffer

E'en as He suffer'd, He may deign to grant

Their prayers, and let their pangs and tears atone

For the black sin of those they love ?

Yes, Lucia,

Thou wilt do well, for Ezzelin's sake, to tread

The path of sorrows ; and perchance at last,

After long years of suffering, grief, and prayer,

All, all may be forgiven ; and thy brother

Enter at last those blissful fields of light,  
Where wicked foes for ever cease to trouble,  
And weary ones have rest.

*Lucia (turning towards the body, then clasping her  
hands, and raising her eyes to Heaven). Then  
night and day*

I'll pray ; nor care for weariness or pain,  
So I may meet thy soul in Heaven again !

FINIS.











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